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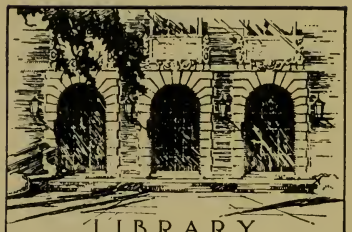

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THE MARDENS,

AND

THE DAVENTRYS.

TALES,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TRAITS AND TRADITIONS OF PORTUGAL,"

&c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

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THE DAVENTRYS.

CHAPTER I.

"THEY are come, madam! they are come!" exclaimed one of the maidens of the Lady Mabel, bursting into the room in which her mistress was seated in company with the Confessor, and attended by her page; "I stayed but to distinguish the flutter of my lord's plume, as he gained the crest of the hill beyond the valley, ere I came to tell the glad tidings."

"Glad indeed!" exclaimed the lady, as she thrust away her embroidery-frame, and rose hurriedly from her chair; "alas! holy father, is it not hard that this meeting should be but the prelude to a longer and a sadder parting?"

"Thy brave knight goeth forth to work in the Lord's vineyard, daughter." was the unsympathizing reply. But the young wife heeded it not; as with flashing eye and flushing cheek, she bent her way towards the elevated terrace from which she could obtain the earliest glimpse of her husband.

On came the gallant train: Sir Geoffrey and his friends, followed by their retainers and men-at-arms; and the Lady Mabel could not but remember that even thus had she been escorted to Cheepsey but a short while back, when she had voluntarily closed her eyes to the sorrow which was now rapidly gaining on her, and whose memory was ever with her — in the

dreams of the day, and in the watches of the night.

"There is my gallant Geoffrey!" she exclaimed to two of her maidens who had followed her to the terrace; "and yonder is my no less gallant brother—But who is he who rides a pace or two apart on a black charger? I cannot decypher him in the distance."

"That should be, or mine eye deceives me, Sir Reginald De Tracy, madam." said one of the damsels.

"Nay, nay, thou art bewildered by the throng;" exclaimed the Lady Mabel; "What should bring the dark De Tracy again to Cheepsey?"

The horsemen meanwhile progressed at a rapid pace, and were already breasting the hill on which the Abbey was seated; when having replied to the joyous gesture of her lord by the waving of her long scarf, the happy Mabel has-

tened to the hall to meet him on his entrance.

"Mine own Geoffrey!" she murmured, as she flung herself upon his breast.

"Thou art on my heart once more, sweet wench!" exclaimed the knight, as he threw his arms about her; "would that I could hold thee here for ever—but I pray thee, Mabel, give a welcome to thine own kinsman, and to each and all of these, mine honoured friends—Above all," he whispered in her ear, "to De Tracy display thine utmost courtesy, and the rather, as for myself, I like him not; for it was Richard's will that he should be once more my guest—He hath somewhat overacted his part in the capital, and his life is threatened. —And now welcome again, brothers-in-arms, to this my poor Abbey of Cheepsey—both for myself, and for this my fair dame, I bid you freely welcome."

When the accustomed greeting had passed

between the hostess and her guests, the Lady Mabel turned with an arch smile towards her brother, as he led her aside:—

Thou art preparing to quarrel with me, Edgar," she said gaily; "in that I have failed to induce Rachel Delawere to meet thee here: in sooth, good brother, I have striven hard to wile the fair damsel hither, but she hath become so suddenly bewitched by the fascinations of Westminster, that she hath said me 'nay,' though I have urged her more than once to yield me this grace:—thou hast been, or I err greatly, so utter a laggard in thy love-passages, that her patience is fairly out-worn, and she is about to retort upon thee thine own coldness—nor do I altogether blame her in this; for truly—"

"Mabel," interposed De Clancy, "I looked not to find the Lady Rachel here: it was enough for her to have assurance that I was about to

become a guest at Cheepsey to make her withhold her own presence."

"Nay, now thou would'st jest with me indeed!"

"Not so, sweet sister, mine is no mood for jesting; I have much to tell thee, but for to-day it must suffice that, save thine own, no heart now beats with kindness for De Clancy."

"Out upon thee for a sceptic!" laughed the lady: is it to me that thou should'st tell such a tale? Trust me, Edgar, I am far better advised; and I have full assurance that if ever woman loved a brave knight, Rachel Delawere hath loved my brother."

"I do believe it, Mabel, but the time is past."

"Would'st thou tell me that she hath slighted thine honest passion to listen to some courtly coxcomb, who hath dazzled her by his gauds, and beguiled her by his sophistries? Surely, Edgar, this cannot be?"

"Nor is it, Mab: therefore restrain thine ire, or turn that flashing eye on me—mine hath been the fault; and should thine eloquence and affection fail me here, mine also will be the penalty."

"I cannot solve the riddle—"

"I dare be sworn thou can'st not, until I lend the clue—listen, Mabel, and even though thy woman-heart condemn thy brother, yet hear him out with patience; but no, no—not to-night—to-morrow, perhaps—meanwhile close not thy bosom against Rachel, for, to be sooth with thee, dear Mab, never did I love her half so well as now."

"And you have parted in anger about a shoe-knot, or the colour of a scarf!" smiled the Lady of Cheepsey: "are you not children to fool it thus?"

"Would that it were indeed so!" said the young Baron; "but the evil is deeper. Oh!

Mabel, thou should'st have seen her as she stood near the Queen-mother on the day of Richard's coronation—never did I look on any thing so lovely—so pure, and swan-like, and withal so gentle—and to think that I should have lost her thus! so madly, so blindly lost her!"

"Now the Virgin grant me patience!" exclaimed the lady; "what may all this mean?"

"The good knight Sir Geoffrey craves thine instant presence, lady," said a page who came hurriedly towards them; "the banquet is spread, and the guests wait."

When the Lady Mabel in obedience to the summons entered the lordly banquetting-hall which we have described in the opening chapter of our tale, followed by her brother, the seats were already filled; and of the vast company there was not one but was pledged to the Crusade.

Hence, as the feast progressed, one theme

alone engrossed the thoughts and lips of the revellers; and the approaching expedition to the Holy Land called forth all the enthusiasm of the assembled knights. The fines which Richard had already levied, or threatened to inflict; the reluctance of the Abbots to meet the demands made upon their monastic revenues; the secession of the Lord Chief Justice, Ranulfe De Granville, who, having vowed himself to the service of the Cross during the previous reign, had applied for permission to resign his office, ostensibly in order that he might the better prepare himself for his forthcoming departure; but actually, because, being a man in the decline of life, and of acknowledged wisdom and foresight, he shrank from the execution of many of the hasty and unripe measures of the young King Richard, in the influence of his one besetting passion, having become blind to the probable consequences of many of the

impolitic methods adopted for its furtherance; and press forward to its accomplishment, reckless of the dissatisfaction which his rapicity was exciting, even hallowed as it was by the veil of piety.

So far indeed had the monarch already carried this injurious system, that De Granville, urged by his loyalty, and warranted by his gray hairs, had even ventured to remind him that he had so far impoverished the crown, denuded himself, and distressed the country, that men began to whisper darkly of his designs, and to marvel if he ever looked to return to the government of his own realm; as, by divesting himself of so many of the attributes of royalty, he had not only dishonoured his own majesty, but prejudiced his successor.

"I was by when De Granville spake thus openly;" said Sir Geoffrey Daventry, in reply to the enquiry of one of his guests; "and never saw I Richard more chafed."

"And what said the king?"

"By my knighthood, little enough; but that little silenced my Lord Chief Justice—Richard turned on his heel as he answered, 'Meseems that, in time of need it is no evil policy for a man to help himself with his own; and moreover, we tell thee, my good Lord De Granville, that if London at this moment might be bought, we would surely sell it, if we might meet with a convenient merchant, that were able to give money enough for it.' Can ye not fancy Richard's brow and eye as he walked to the far end of the hall? Marry, there was not a noble present but saw how this must end—and truly, so it chanced, for on the morrow De Granville renounced his office, nor was it until Hugh Putsey, the Lord Bishop of Durham, gave the King occasion for mirthfulness, that he once more turned a bright brow on his followers."

"My Lord of Durham hath purchased of Richard the manor and wapentake of Seggesfield, hath he not?"

"Aye, truly," said Sir Geoffrey: "the good Bishop is an aged man, and a wealthy, and not only hath he done as thou sayest, but he hath also bought of the King no less than his own province, at I know not what cost, whereupon he is shortly to be created an Earl; and Richard already makes merry at his own handiwork, having, as he saith, the craft to make a new Earl out of an old Bishop—nor is this all even yet; for he hath appointed to give to the King a thousand marks of gold to be made Chief Justice in De Granville's room, that so he may avoid the forthcoming Crusade; and already is the appeal gone up to the Holy See."

"Would that some few of our gallant knights were as loth to quit the land as this good churchman;" murmured the Lady Mabel

with a sad smile, as she glanced towards her husband.

"Say not so, sweet Mab;" said the knight, "the wife of a Daventry should be slow with such a wish. Are we not even now seated beneath the effigies of Sir Aubrey the Pious, the founder of our house, who earned not only honour, but salvation, in the Holy Land? All who bear our name should further the good cause."

"I would give all else, Geoffrey, freely give it—to this alone I am not equal."

"Forbear, Mabel;" said the knight as a cloud stole over his brow; "I would not that any one among our guests should hear thee talk thus—it is not seemly, fair wife."

Who that has felt the bitterness of a first rebuke—the first chill of affection cast back upon itself—the first inference of blame where all had hitherto been declared faultless; who,

that has experienced this, need be told that tears swelled in the eyes of the young wife, and that her bosom heaved as her husband hastily averted his head. How she could have flung herself upon his breast, and wept out an apology for her own tenderness—how she could have striven to smile away his frown, and to whisper gentle rejoinders to those cold words—but many eyes were upon her, and she sat silently beside him, anxiously watching until the cloud should pass away, and he should again turn towards her with his accustomed gentleness.

The revel was a late one; and ere the nobles separated, allusion was made by Sir Guy de Stainville, a young knight who was high in favour with the King, to the extraordinary circumstance of the Jewish presents having been refused by Richard, at a period when he was anxious to possess himself of treasure for the furtherance of the Crusade; and then, for the

first time during the banquet, the voice of Father Dominick was heard :

" His Highness is a Christian prince, Sir Knight, and brooks not gold grasped from the devil's palm — it would have worked him evil."

" Beshrew me, good father," was the laughing rejoinder; " but the refusal of the offering seemeth to me to have yet worked him more —what earned he by his resolve, save bloodshed and burnings in his capital?"

" He hath at least not subjected his royal person to the suspicion of heresy, as some have done for a lighter cause of temptation;" followed up the monk.

" None could impute so foul a crime to His Highness," said the young knight; " and he even now preparing for the Holy Land."

" So are others," persisted the Franciscan; " who may not be so free from taint:" and as

he spoke he glanced towards De Clancy, but the Baron neither shrank beneath his eye, nor offered a rejoinder.

At length the banquet terminated, and as the guests withdrew one by one to their allotted apartments, Sir Geoffrey and his young wife were left alone.

"Thou art sad, sweet Mab," said the knight, as the last lingerer withdrew; "never, surely, looked those dark eyes so dim, nor that soft cheek so pale—what ails thee, pretty one?"

"Dost thou ask me the question, Geoffrey? thou, who but an hour back did'st chide me for the very love I bear thee? And now tell me, dear one;—Would'st thou see me merry at the thought of our separation? and joyous in the prospect of the dangers which await thee in a far land, among heretics and savages? Would'st thou do this, Geoffrey? for truly then shall I fail in mine obedience—I cannot choose but weep."

"Nay, weep not yet, sweet Mabel; look round thee, love—each of these good knights my ancestors, did loyal service for his spurs, and each of these fair dames and damsels, now smiling blandly from the pannelled walls, have borne the evil from which thou shrinkest."

"And some were widowed—" murmured Mabel, as she hung upon his neck.

"Aye truly, trembler; while others were outlived by their good lords—but I must have a brighter welcome, or I shall away again to Court."

"And thou wilt chide no more, Geoffrey?"

"Chide *thee,* fair wench? nay, nay, I chide thee not—I know not how to chide thee. But I must tell thee of De Tracy, Mabel: Richard hath wearied of him; his is too hard a nature for the pleasure of our young monarch, and though he hath taken the Cross, it is hinted that he hath no yearning for the Holy Land;

moreover he hath dealt an unlucky blow of late, which wrought much evil in the capital, and much disquiet to the sovereign, and Richard prayed me that I would receive him here at Cheepsey until the evil be overpast."

"Would that he had chosen for him another abiding-place;" said the Lady Mabel; "I affect him not!"

"Nor would I that thou should'st, fair wife;" laughed Sir Geoffrey uneasily; "it were scarce seemly, and thou so lately wedded."

"How could I, mine own Geoffrey, seeing that I am thine?" whispered the lady fondly. "But tell me, I pray thee, of Rachel Delawere. De Clancy hath hinted at a coldness which threatens to o'erthrow his hopes—hast thou learnt aught of this?"

"But vaguely, Mabel, though I have heard it hinted that the very out-break of De Tracy, of which I have just spoken, hath tended to its development—'Tis said—but pshaw! 'tis an

idle tale; and if De Clancy withhold it, I know not if it be knightly even in thine husband to bruit it abroad."

"Tell me at least at whom De Tracy struck."

"At some Jewish Rabbi who would have forced his way to the presence; I did not learn his name."

"How could a blow like this affect my brother, or Rachel Delawere? There must be some mystery past my finding out in this strange tale," said Mabel musing: "and yet—ah! now I have a clue," she continued suddenly; "know'st thou not, fair husband, that Rachel hath a Jewish page, whom she received at the dying hands of his mother? Trust me, De Clancy must also have smitten at the Rabbi, and he hath proved to be a kinsman of the boy—have I not guessed aright?"

"Not quite, sweet sorceress; thy woman-wit, meanwhile, hath not failed thee at a pinch,

for thou hast wrought a pretty fable from a dry fact. If mine advices be correct, the page hath no part in the adventure."

"'Tis passing strange," said the lady; "but be the cause what it may, I deeply rue the effect. Rachel hath loved my brother, nay, I dare be sworn, still loves him well; and for De Clancy, never did man love woman more."

"Save only—"

"Nay, I will not even except thee, my Geoffrey."

"What, if I prove that thou dost me wrong, Mabel?"

"Thou can'st not — she hath his whole heart."

"Not quite, Mab, thou did'st believe that it was thus, and so did Rachel; but I fear me that she is now undeceived—"

"Oh, Geoffrey, tell me all this is worse than cruel."

"Nay, nay, 'tis a wild tale of some handsome Jewess, loved before De Clancy learnt to bask beneath the smile of Rachel; a dark-browed beauty who won him ere he remembered her Faith; and whom he quitted to pay his vows to the golden glances of a Delawere."

"De Clancy love a Jewess!" gasped out Mabel.

"So runs the rumour, but I pledge not my word upon its truth."

"Thy word!" echoed the lady; "I would not peril this bodkin in my hair on such a venture—'tis a foul slander, and De Clancy must free himself of the stain as he would of a plague-spot."

"I know not how that may be;" returned the knight calmly; "but 'tis the gossip at Court; and meanwhile the Lord Pembroke sent him advisement that his ward was somewhat ill-at-ease, and for a time would brook no society—how looked that, Mabel?"

"Gravely, in sooth; but Rachel hath, perchance, suffered herself to hearken too lightly to the scandal of the Court circle, and so wronged my brother—true love is ever watchful overmuch."

"Nay, how may that be, Mab?" asked the knight hastily; "if its watching prove nothing to the disparagement of its object?"

"Because," was the emphatic reply, as the words of her absent friend flashed on the memory of the young wife; "the watcher doth but lose his own rest to wrong those on whom he plays the spy."

"Thou would'st have men sleep then," said Sir Geoffrey, forcing a smile; "when the enemy are in the camp."

"Not so, good husband; but let them first be certain of the enemy, lest the blow fall wrongfully, and crush the innocent."

"Thou art a subtle reasoner, sweet wife;

yet would I ever, for mine own share, rather sleep with a weapon in my hand, than with an open palm across my eyes—he who looks forward sees the narrow brook, while he who rushes on blindly may chance to stumble into a river."

Mabel shook her head sadly.

"And now let us hence, pretty one," pursued the knight, after a momentary silence; "the lights are waxing dim, and we are ourselves scarcely in a blither mood—let us talk no more of this: after so long an absence, I have a thousand things to tell thee of the court; nor last, nor least, how Richard chid me that I had not carried thee a prisoner to Westminster to do honour to his crowning. And how hast thou sped meanwhile, Mabel mine, with thy maidens and the good father for all companionship, and thine embroidery-frame for all amusement? But badly I fear me, or that cheek would not be thus blenched. This must

not be again: I will not leave thee thus to ply thy needle to thine own despite—thou shalt with me, Mab; for to be sooth with thee, I love not to part from thee, even for an hour."

"Am I then to wend with thee to Palestine?" asked the young wife, as she affected a playfulness which brought the tears to her eyes.

"Thou art to come to my heart—" was the reply, as the knight folded his arms about her; "and for awhile let that suffice thee—when the evil hour cometh, it will be time enough to weep."

CHAPTER II.

"I TELL thee, Reginald, that thou hast wrought a good deed."

"In what wise," asked De Tracy doggedly; "when I have lost through mine adventure the court favour which it had cost me such long years to win? have I not advised thee that Richard hath turned a cold eye on me from that day forth?"

"And what matters it," said the monk slowly and sarcastically: "what matters it that the headstrong boy play the churl, when he is so soon to walk down from his cushioned throne, to pursue a shadow? Hast thou forgotten the extent of thy revenge? Was it not the husband of thy sister who was smitten? He who blighted thy hopes, withered thy pride, and wronged thy prejudices? He, the accursed Jew, who stole from thee the jewel which shone brightly at thy hearth, and whose lustre lit up thy dwelling?"

They were standing together side by side in one of the deeply-indented bay windows of an apartment looking towards the chapel. Their lamp was extinguished, but the moon was at the full, and the dark blue sky threw out her light so clearly, that where her beams fell they created a partial day, while beyond, the deep masses of shadow stretched along the earth, defying the scrutiny of the keenest eye.

"Fye upon thee, Reginald;" said the Franciscan, after a pause which remained unbroken by his companion; "art thou a man, that thou should'st pine thus for a King's favour? better strive for a lady's smile—Have I been deceived in thee, after watching thee from thy boyhood?"

"I have not yet told thee all—"

"Say on then, if the tale be worth the hearing."

"Ben Abdel had a daughter—"

"Ha!"

"Ay, a most fair and lovely daughter, with all the deep beauty of her Israelitish father, blent with the softer graces of—but pshaw! no need to tell thee this—Enough that I saw her only for an instant, as she struck back with her small hand the weapon which I had raised to smite her father, and turned on me a look which brought back upon me the thought of years I would fain wipe out from my memory.

I could have sworn that I had held her to my heart, and dreamt wild dreams of holy hope in which her image had shone vividly, ere I was wrecked in soul, and turned courtier in very scorn of fortune!—I hugged the vain belief, but when I missed her in the fray, in vain I strove to trace her: I searched the ruin of what had once been Ben Abdel's home, but I found her not—I know not whither she bent her steps."

"Doubtless she perished—"

"I should deem otherwise: Ben Abdel is also missing; they must have fled together."

"In such case she is cared for," said father Dominick quietly.

"Cared for!" echoed the knight angrily; "Dost thou not see wherefore I am thus chafed by the discovery? Can'st thou not appreciate the feeling with which, when I looked upon her, I vowed to my own heart that she should fulfil

the destiny from which her mother fled? Hast thou no sympathy with the blighted hopes, the crushed prospects of a sanguine mind? Do the overthrow of my just expectations awaken in thee no echoing regret? Art thou insensible to the ignominy of seeing thy blood thus prolonged upon the earth, blent with that of an accursed Israelite? I have not yet in such case attained to thy philosophy."

"Thou hast not yet numbered my years;" was the unperturbed reply; "or thou would'st have seen that thy deeds of evil must weigh down the sacrifice thou would'st fain offer for their expiation. Thou hast not yet endured my trials, or thou could'st not thus dwell on so poor an accident as the existence of this Rabbi's daughter, and make it food for misery. Rouse thee, De Tracy! Hast thou no question to ask of me? Art thou insensible to the efforts which I have never ceased to make in thy cause?"

"To the furtherance of thine own revenge."

"Perhaps so;" replied the monk calmly; "and wherefore not? Do I serve thee the less that all the energies of self-interest are put forth in the struggle? If I hate these Daventrys with a hatred as intense as that which thou hast borne, and dost still bear, to those of Ben Abdel's blood, am I to forego a vengeance which thou art so ready to indulge?"

"Thou hast not the same cause—"

"Have I not?" exclaimed the Franciscan passionately, as he extended his right arm towards his companion, and ground his clenched teeth with a vehemence which, while the convulsion lasted, gave him all the semblance of a fiend: "Have I not, sayest thou? Go to, boy—where thou hast shed a tear, I have wept blood—where thou hast breathed a sigh, I have spent nights of watching and of groans. Did they know *who* stands beneath their roof-tree, would

not the hand of the weak-witted knight of Cheepsey and those of his myrmidons be even now on my throat? When Sir Geoffrey pauses yonder on the floor of the vast hall before us, and looks upward at the portrait of the stern Sir Aubrey which hangs near the portal, as he sighs out, 'My poor uncle, he died mad in Normandie'! how would he brook the tale which I could tell him!"

"I would fain hear that tale."

"I doubt thee not: and truly, this is a fitting hour, and thou art a fitting auditor, for such a history. I would tell it with night over the heavens, and my hand upon thine arm even thus—Yet, De Tracy, I dare not trust thee!"

"Am I not thy son?"

"And what though thou should'st be such? yet mark me:—I tell thee not that it is even thus—What though thou should'st be indeed my

son, hast thou led such a life of honour and uprightness, that I should put my life into thy hands in very wantonness? Did'st thou select thy parentage, and decide on thine own destiny? Or did I say that from among men I choose thee as my son? Have our worldly wanderings taught us to see each in the other some high and attaching quality to which all else are blind? Or rather was it not chance which linked us thus together? blind, besotted chance? Would'st thou not feel the blood upon thy brow, did some light fool point towards thee at the Court, and whisper that thou wert the sin-begotten offspring of a monk? And I, on my part—did any taunt me with the tale, should I not fling it back into their teeth with stern denial—Wherefore then should I put a trust in thee which I refuse to other men?"

"Dost thou believe that I would betray those of my own blood?" asked De Tracy.

"Aye, marry; have I not cause to do so? Did'st thou not seek to sacrifice thy sister to save thyself? The fair child who hung upon thy neck, and called thee 'father'? Why then should'st thou spare me? I have shewn thee no tenderness—lavished on thee no blandishments—clung to thee with no trust! De Tracy, though all beside be false and hollow, I will yet speak to thee plainly and openly; I am too proud to delude by sophistries, and to degrade by flatteries—at least so to delude and to degrade one who has seen me with my cowl flung back; and I tell thee that the tale involves so many passages connected with thine ambition, thy pride of place, and thy surpassing selfishness, that were I ten times thy father I would not trust thee."

"Then am I wronged!" said the knight.

"Not a whit: for should'st thou not be my son, my strait were ten times more dangerous

—The cowl and the cassock have not ever been my garb—I knew the brand ere I conned the breviary—my foot was on the stirrup ere it was planted on the altar-step: Have I then now to learn how men feel when they are tempted? Thus far mark me, De Tracy—the uncle of Sir Geoffrey wronged me, and though I revenged the wrong, yet have I nor forgotten, nor forgiven: thou art enamoured of the Lady Mabel—and I have sworn that thou shalt win her!"

"Thou hast—and still she loathes me!"

"That, at least, is well, for the sex are ever in extremes: have patience, and trust me when I say that all works as I wish. The bride of Cheepsey is not one to be won by half a score of sighs like a love-sick girl; remember that she hath wedded the husband of her choice: and yet I tell thee, despair not, for the snare is sure. I have safe information that the eye

of the Church is on the fiery brother of the dame, for it hath been whispered to me that, during the Jewish slaughter which thou did'st promote so bravely, De Clancy saved a woman of the despised and condemned people; and, not content with her rescue, lingered beside her until he had disposed her safely with his Christian mistress, the light-headed Lady Delawere—"

"Speak on!" exclaimed De Tracy eagerly.

"The Lady Delawere was herself already under the suspicion of heresy;" continued the monk with cold composure, as he laid his spread palm heavily on the shoulder of his companion; "the taint hath clung closely, and many eyes have been upon her; nor will the power of the Lord Pembroke long suffice to screen her from its penalties—and then, good knight—"

"What then? why dost thou pause?"

"Then will she escape by flight from the

threatenings of the Church, of which I will be careful that she shall have timely warning; and hither will she come for safety; for the Earl of Leicester will fear for himself, and he is her only kinsman; while Sir Geoffrey's dame will, with the natural perversity of woman, only cling the closer to her friend when she is attainted, and hunted down—"

"What more?"

"Dullard!" sneered the monk; "Will not the Knight be on his way to Palestine? And can we not make the prosperous suit of the lover a pledge for the safety of the friend? Or, failing in that attempt, attaint Sir Geoffrey's dame together with her guest? How sayest thou now?"

"That without my own poor excuse of passion, thou art a fiend!" exclaimed De Tracy, roused into momentary disgust.

"I forgive thee;" said his companion;

" nay, I even thank thee for thine honesty of speech—I would have it ever thus. The poor niceties of worldly courtesy suit not with such a bond as ours. Be it a fiend, if thou wilt, with whom thou dost even now hold converse—be it a fiend, Reginald De Tracy, still shalt thou bow beneath a mightier spirit than thine own, and struggle vainly in the toils: but a truce with this poor fooling—I would rather serve than scare thee. And now tell me, Sir Knight, how should'st thou affect this poor Abbey of Cheepsey? Is it not a fair pile, with its lands and dependencies? Men die, as we have learnt, in the Holy Land; and Sir Geoffrey bears not a charmed life—He has nor son, nor brother; but he will leave behind him a most fair widow who will have many suitors; and were it not well that thy claim should be the first and the fastest? Yet be it even as thou wilt —say only that, after a life spent as thine

has been, thou art now scared by a shadow, and I will e'en work out my purpose without thine aid—I am no boy: my vow is registered, and I will not fail in its fulfilment."

"Should this rescued Jewess prove to be the daughter of Ben Abdel?"

"What then?"

"I know not;" said De Tracy, as he turned gloomily away, "we will talk no more of this to-night."

"Sayest thou so?" laughed the monk bitterly, as he grasped his arm: "Say'st thou so, and I beside thee? Hast thou now to learn my humour? Shall I suffer thee to indulge thine own like a petted child, while I stand tamely by, and strive to smile thee into a brighter mood? Talk no more of this, say'st thou? I tell thee otherwise—now is the season to look calmly forward to the future, if thou art a man—and, listen to me; I have as yet but tried thee—thou *darest* not betray me."

"Dare not!"

"Aye, dare not; my words were well advised:—Know I not every passage of thine history? Have I not been ever beside thee in thy career of crime, when thou knewest not that any eye was on thee? I tell thee that it is even thus, Sir Knight. With my gold, hast thou polluted thy soul—with my good permission hast thou drained the cup of evil to the coarsest dregs, and then craved for more—Thou hast been a very puppet in my hands for mine own purposes—Had I so willed it, I could have held thee back; but I had need of thee, and I laboured to fit thee for thine office; it was the task of years, and I gloried in its success: I watched thee narrowly; I read each secret passion of thy soul, and I saw that I had judged rightly when I marked thy thirst of crime. Nay, nay, move not aside thus haughtily—but hear me while I laud thee for thy surpassing aptitude in

evil—while I tell thee that thou hast already outrun mine intent tenfold, and earned to thyself a gratitude which will be eternal. Had I carved out the destiny of the fair girl who fled from thee, I could not have wished it other than it was—a blight, a misery to all her race."

"This from thee?"

"Aye, from me! it was the first fruits of a vengeance that I had nursed for years—a goodly promise of the harvest still to come—a foretaste of recovered peace."

"Trust me with all thy purpose, and its cause, and I will swear to hold thy secret safe—" said the knight.

"Swear!" echoed the Franciscan, "and what are oaths? words—sounds—uttered mockeries—I have no faith in vows."

"How then can I earn thy confidence?"

"By deeds—words quiver on the tongue,

and pass us by—but deeds work out a perpetuity of truth. Cast words to women—they are the playthings of passion—shew thyself a man by nobler means—I ask for no professions; I have no faith in them; I have outlived their spell; The lips are weak beside the arm. I seek more from thee than idle promises: I seek to see thee act; to approve thyself the apt pupil of a world-taught master who has learnt to value all things by their result; nor wilt thou disappoint me. And now, ponder on all which thou hast heard to-night, and when thou hast decided between the world and thine own interest, I will tell thee more—farewell!" And as the monk spoke, he passed through a door near the spot on which he had been standing, and De Tracy was alone.

CHAPTER III.

A TEMPORARY calm followed the reception of the Jewish Miriam by the Lady Rachel Delawere; a calm which grew out of the very wretchedness which each sought, by a violent effort, to veil from the other. In vain had the Lord Pembroke, on discovering the unwelcome presence of this new guest beneath his roof, expostulated with his ward on the impolicy and

danger of a measure which was so well calculated to involve her in difficulties too weighty for her strength; for, with her accustomed recklessness, the Lady Rachel had disregarded his reasonings, and bidden defiance to his threats; and for a time it seemed indeed that the fears of the Earl had been engendered only by his own timid nature, for day succeeded day, and no occurrence betrayed the existence of peril either to the guardian or his headstrong charge. But such a state of things could not long continue; and when it was announced to the Lord Pembroke that it was the pleasure of the King to include him in the temporary government of the Country with the Bishop of Ely and other honourable men, during the absence of the Monarch in the Crusade, it was also hinted that one of the first measures required of him, would be the surrender of his ward to the ecclesiastical custody, together with all her lands and endow-

ments; she being suspected of a tendency to heretical opinions which it behoved those in authority in the Church to eradicate and uproot; while it was inferred that an asylum had already been prepared for her in the convent of White Sisters at Winchester, where she was to abide, until by such measures as should be deemed expedient by the community, her perfect restoration to the true faith should be satisfactorily achieved.

The unqualified surrender of her Jewish protegé was insisted on in less guarded terms; and, under these circumstances, the Earl resolved to apprize his ward of the threatened measures, ere by his acceptance of office he should cripple his own freedom of action, and be constrained to employ towards her a harshness which was foreign to his nature.

For the last few weeks, Lord Pembroke had enjoyed very infrequent opportunities of

conversation with the Lady Rachel, for she had so deeply resented his objections to her reception of the Jewess, that their interviews had been productive of any thing rather than gratification to either party, and had consequently been mutually avoided. Now, however, when he possessed the opportunity of conferring a positive benefit upon her, the Earl resolved to seek her in her own apartments, a step which he had not taken for a considerable period, and which was far from being anticipated by the Lady Rachel.

The departure of the King for Normandy was daily expected, when Lord Pembroke received the intelligence which we have just detailed; and as he was fully aware that the responsible government of the Country would devolve upon the Prelates, he had no hope of any relaxation of the purposed severity towards his ward, and no power of appeal to higher au-

thority. With every disposition to fulfil even to the utmost the duties of his guardianship, and his pledge to his dead friend, Lord Pembroke was perhaps the most injudicious protector who could have been selected for the spoiled child of fortune and caprice. Unaccustomed from her infancy to contradiction, flattered by her inferiors, idolized by her parents, and adulated by her companions, the Lady Rachel, ere she became an orphan, had learnt the value alike of her personal and of her adventitious advantages; and when once the first burst of grief was over, she felt rather inclined to resent the delegated authority of her guardian than to conciliate his affection; while the Earl, on his part, long accustomed to see her the cynosure of her circle, for once suffered his judgment to be prostrated by his sympathy, and, by withholding for a season the exercise of his power, lost an opportunity which his high-spirited ward never suf-

fered him to redeem. Under these circumstances a tacit agreement of non-interference had been established between the parties, which, save in the instance of the little Jewish orphan, had never hitherto been productive of any serious inconvenience to the lady, though there were moments when it caused some mortification to the Earl: as, acting ever according to the uncompromising and straight-forward dictates of her own honest nature, the Lady Rachel had more than once disappointed and circumvented the more worldly policy of her guardian. Not altogether unwilling to be released from so weighty a responsibility as the charge of a young and beautiful heiress, who, even in those days of mental thraldom, ventured thus early to think and act for herself, Lord Pembroke had negociated more than one highly honourable treaty of marriage with some of the noblest born young gallants of the time; but

his diplomacy and prudence availed him nothing: a simple negative from the lips of the lady proved as effectual a barrier to all future proceedings as a royal mandate; and the Earl, baffled, circumvented, and set at nought, had at length abandoned all attempts at match-making, and fairly left his ward to decide for herself.

Yet let it not be supposed that Lord Pembroke did not feel the most intense interest in the well-being of the fair girl whom he had received from the hands of her dying father: and such as we have already painted the Lady Rachel, she was indeed a creature to love as well as to admire. It was her misfortune that her mental attributes outran her times, and that she could not subscribe to that thraldom alike of thought and action which was at that period the portion of her sex. There was a playfulness in her perversity which made the Earl

smile even at his own defeat; and never, until his expostulations on the subject of Ben Abdel's daughter had grown almost into severity, had he seen a frown of anger on the brow of his ward. On that occasion, however, the surprize had been mutual. The Lady Rachel learnt that the Earl could assume a power to which she had never considered him entitled, and which she had certainly never expected to see him exhibit; while he on his part gained a more perfect insight into the consistency and firmness of her character than he had done during all their previous intercourse.

It was not therefore without some degree of reluctance that Lord Pembroke compelled himself to intrude upon the privacy of his ward, the more especially as, since the sojourn of Miriam beneath his roof, the Lady Rachel had lived in more seclusion than at any previous period; and had moreover assumed a staidness,

almost indeed a sadness of deportment at utter variance with her ordinary humour.

When Lord Pembroke entered the apartment in which the Lady Rachel was accustomed to receive her guests, he was surprized to find it empty, and not less so to discover in the unusual disarray of the gorgeous furniture that his ward had evidently had no intention to admit visitors. The flowers were withered in their chrystal vases; the strings of the theorbo which lay upon a table, were broken, and no fire blazed in the ample hearth. His foot-fall sounded drearily in the vast apartment, yet it failed to excite enquiry; and it was not until he rang a small silver hand-bell that the page appeared from an inner room.

"Is thy mistress abroad, boy?" he asked somewhat impatiently.

"Not so, my lord; but, being ill-at-ease, and indisposed for guests, my lady hath not left her bower-chamber."

"Will she refuse all comers?"

"For that may I not answer, good my lord: shall I crave her pleasure?"

"At thy best speed, Sir Page—" said the Earl; and in the next instant the boy disappeared.

His absence was a brief one; and he bowed low on his re-entrance, as he declared that he had the bidding of his mistress to give now and ever instant entrance to the Lord Pembroke.

The bower-chamber of the Lady Rachel, into which the Earl was now conducted by the richly-attired page, was a sunny morning-room, lit by one large bay window. Within the recess sate the Lady in a high chair propped with cushions; her cheek was very pale, her eye dull, and her hair disordered; and the embroidery-frame which stood near her, seemed rather placed there from habit than because it had afforded occupation to her retirement. At

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her feet knelt the Jewess, sorting a mass of party-coloured silks, or rather seeming to sort them, for the work had evidently not progressed; her oriental dress contrasting as strongly with the plain white robe of her protectress, as did her clear dazzling beauty with the pale loveliness of the face which was bent down towards her. At the other extremity of the apartment the maidens of the lady were busily plying their needles, and communing in a low voice among themselves.

As the Earl entered, the attendants rose and withdrew, and the Jewess was about to follow their example when a motion of his hand arrested her purpose.

"I have intruded, fair ward;" he said gently; "from a necessity which admitted not of choice—the exigency of the case must be my apology."

"The Lord Pembroke was not always wont

to crave excuse for his courtesy;" was the reply; "he is surely satisfied that his visits can never be unwelcome."

"Sorry am I," said the Earl, "that they should ever be productive of disquiet, either to one whom I so much love, or to those who are dear to her—it hath been my misfortune, sweet Rachel, that it should be thus."

Again Miriam prepared to depart, but Lord Pembroke laid his hand upon her shoulder as she strove to rise.

"Sit, maiden," he resumed, drawing the chair which the page had placed for him nearer to that of the Lady Rachel, while he continued to gaze in wondering admiration on the Jewess; "that which I have come to say concerns thee no less than my noble ward, and it is but seemly that thou should'st share in the confidence which I am about to make. That I opposed thine entrance here, and thy reception as a member

of my household, I deny not—were it again to do, again should I earnestly strive against it; and that I did in nothing overact my duty the event hath proved."

"Surely, my lord, this subject hath been long worn threadbare." said the Lady Rachel hastily.

"I would that it were so in truth, that we might cast it aside for ever," replied the Earl; "but it hath only to-day been so forced upon my attention, that I have been fain to give it more thought even than heretofore."

"Only tell me that it hath in nothing tended to thine own despite or inconvenience, my lord," again interposed the Lady Rachel; "and we will at once dismiss it; as for myself, I reck not of the evil which it may threaten."

"Nay, not so, lady;" said the Jewess rising from her low seat, and taking the hand of her protectress; "not for the sake of one so lost

alike to hope and to happiness as myself, shalt thou incur the slightest risk—the wind bloweth from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and even so misery cometh from all points—the wind roameth as it may list, and none can stay its progress; sorrow in like wise runneth its course, and no kindness can arrest its ravages. Wherefore then should the hunted deer linger beneath the green boughs, and stain the soft sward with its rushing blood, when its hurt cannot be healed by the long shadows?"

"I will not listen to thee, Miriam; thou hast no other home."

"None—" said the Jewess in a tone of calm despair; "neither home nor kinsman—neither abiding-place nor city of refuge—yet fear not for me, lady; He who numbereth the hairs of my head will not suffer me to perish."

"We will at least hear the tidings of my

Lord of Pembroke :—we perchance torture ourselves needlessly. Prithee say on, my lord."

"First then to solve thy question, gentle ward;" said the Earl; "the presence of the Jewish maiden can bode me no evil, beyond that which will be brought on me by the thought of the sore penalty which thou wilt thyself be called upon to pay for thy rash generosity. Know then that yester-eve I had advisement that Richard hath in his good pleasure, done me the grace to offer me an office in the State beyond my poor deserts, and one which it were disloyal in me to refuse; no less than a place in the government of his kingdom under the supreme rule of the good lord and holy prelate of Ely; by the same messenger I received notice that my first act of justice to the realm must be to yield thee up, on suspicion of heretical tendencies, to the guardianship of the White Sisters at Winchester, to continue in their cloister

so long as it shall be the pleasure of Holy Church there to detain thee."

"The pious Prelate had better compel me to accept the veil, and seize on my estates," said the Lady Rachel contemptuously; "because I have ventured to believe that there may exist virtue and goodness without the pale of the church."

"Be warned, sweet ward;" said the Lord Pembroke hurriedly: "in the present temper of the times, such words may prove thy ruin: nor—pardon me the reproof—are they altogether such as become thy sex and years—but my tale is not yet ended. I am also bound to deliver up to the same holy keeping, the Jewish Miriam, and thy young page, without pledge or token of their future destiny; both the one and the other being obnoxious to the priesthood."

As the Earl spoke, the cheek of the indignant Rachel crimsoned painfully, and her eyes flashed as she exclaimed:

"Is it so in sooth! Then well did the Lord Delawere select a guardian for his orphan daughter, when he chose my Lord of Pembroke to protect her helplessness. A worthy termination to an irksome task will this be, noble Earl; but Rachel Delawere shall be no tame and trembling victim: no crouching sacrifice to the grasping avarice of a selfish church-man; no supine and spiritless seconder of a sordid scheme."

"How bitterly dost thou wrong me!" exclaimed Lord Pembroke, stung by her disdainful tone and words: "Hast thou to learn today how I have loved even thy very faults, and tried to think them virtues? Had I been the base churl thou would'st strive to make me, wherefore am I here? Come I not in all honour and honesty to warn thee of the approaching peril while yet I may do so without a breach of trust, and the falsification of a solemn oath?"

"I see it all;" said the Lady Rachel bursting into tears; "I have indeed wronged thee, my gracious guardian; forgive me, I am sick at heart, and see an enemy in all who approach me; but thou wert ever forbearing, and wilt pardon me! How dost thou counsel? For myself, I am half distraught, and cannot think."

"My counsel will be wise, sweet Rachel, and yet most distasteful—thou must forego thy friend—"

"Say not so, my good Lord, Miriam hath wound herself about my heart—I cannot part from her."

"May I speak?" asked the Jewess of the Earl; "may the bondwoman lift up her voice in the secret chamber, and crave answer of her lord?"

"I will answer thee what thou wilt;" replied Lord Pembroke.

"Then tell me," said Miriam; "if I depart

to seek my people, and go forth with the boy into the desert, with my loaf of bread and my cruise of water, even like unto Hagar and Ishmael, how will it fare with the Lady Rachel?"

"As it hath ever fared, maiden; and her care for thee and for the page will be forgotten."

"Then will I go hence:" exclaimed the Jewess; "and seek out with the lad an abiding-place for him and for myself: not one hair of her head shall be injured for our sakes! Jerusalem may be laid low, and the sons and daughters of Israel may bewail themselves in sack-cloth and in ashes, but they who loved the songs of Sion, and tuned their harps to the praise of the Mighty One who dwelleth in his holy hill, shall not be for ever as cast-aways among the nations! Once our soldiers were swifter than eagles, and fiercer than lions; and though now the wing of the eagle is broken, and the roar of the lion

is hushed, yet hath the power, and the wisdom, and the holiness, only passed away for a season—As the sun setteth behind the mountain, and sinketh into the waves of the great deep, so hath the glory departed from thee, oh, Israel! but even as the dawn brings back the light and the majesty which had passed away, so shall another morning of brightness arise for the people of Jehovah; and the tribes which were scattered over the face of the earth, the refused of all nations, and the rebuked of all lands, be reunited in strength, and in power, in wisdom, and in love! And when that day indeed cometh, let he who shall remember Miriam—let he who shall preserve the memory of the daughter of Ben Abdel, teach the tribes to declare in the Temple the name of those who sheltered her in her need, and administered to her in her necessities—but let them not have to tell, that when she had eaten of their bread, and laid upon their bosom,

she grew into a serpent, and stung them even unto the death—that when they were menaced for her sake with dark threatenings, and misjudged because of their love for her, she clung unto them to their despite, and bought her own ease with their suffering. Let them rather declare to the people, and to the tribes, and to the aged women, and to the sucking babes, that she did her duty as became a daughter of Israel, and went forth on her way rejoicing, for the peace of a grateful heart went with her."

As the Jewess spoke, the eyes of the Lord Pembroke were fastened upon her, and he was unconscious that the page had gradually drawn nearer, until he had sunk down on his knees beside the chair of his mistress. He saw only the excited and high-souled Miriam, steadfast and fearless in her sense of duty; and he wondered no longer at the tenacity with which one so capable of appreciating her peculiar

character as the Lady Rachel, had clung to her throughout every difficulty.

"Thy safety shall be cared for, Miriam;" he said kindly: "thou art too young and too lovely to be abandoned to the tender mercies of such a world as this: and yet I fear to promise more than I may be permitted to perform."

"There shall be no need, my lord;" said Miriam, as she bent her head deferentially: "Alone I stood beside my dead father, and alone I will go forth; the gentle tending which hath been lavished on me beneath this roof hath weakened in nothing the strength of my resolve: shew me only where to find a remnant of my people, and I will return, and be unto them as a daughter."

"There hath been a gathering of the tribes at York, as I learn." said the Earl.

"Then will I humble myself, and bear the

yoke of my desolation meekly; looking back upon the days of my pride as upon a brightness gone by for ever—In youth I was steeped in luxury to the very lips, and the fear of sorrow never dwelt with me—that which had been wrought with weariness, and woven in heaviness of spirit, was trampled beneath my feet, and flung down wantonly in my path—I wore sumptuous apparel, and gold was unto me even as the dust which no man valueth; my raiment was of red, and of white, and of purple, with girdles of silk clasped with the bright jewels which come to us from over seas—my floors were overlaid with tapestries and velvets; and costly essences made the air sweet as the breezes which breathed freshness over Eden; I fed my fires with cedar, and cypress, and sandal wood, and my lamp with oils, precious as the gums of Araby: then came a night of darkness, and the gold and the jewels and the costly stuffs had

passed away, and that which was dearer and brighter had passed away with them; and trouble fell upon my spirit—but another change came upon me, and again I was pillowed on down, and drank from vessels of gold, and from vessels of silver, and kind eyes looked on me, and kind tones were in my ears; and though I cherished the secret anguish of mine own heart, I forgot that the Sanctuary was in the dust, and that wolves brought forth their young in the sacred places—but the remembrance of Sion's overthrow is come back upon me; the memory of the unhallowed grave of Ben Abdel rises once more before mine eyes."

"Miriam," said the Lady Rachel tenderly: "I may not suffer thee to depart thus—hast thou not been unto me as a sister? have I not opened unto thee my whole heart? and shall we part in terror of an idle threat?"

"Lady—" replied the Jewess; "let us not

strive against the mighty, nor make war against the strong; but rather bend the knee in gratitude that the warning hath been timely. When the hosts of the Gentiles fell upon the children of Israel with hootings, and with curses, with yellings, and with the strong arm which smote down all before it, there was not one to warn the victims of the coming evil—it came upon them as the thunder-cloud of summer, sudden and resistless; and thus few escaped—the wounds which had been bound up, burst out afresh, and the cry of blood was loud;—now the way of escape is easy, and the path is straight—I will forth upon my way as the arrow from the bow of the archer, and the greyhound from his leash—as the rushing brook will I run my course—and as the hunted deer will I spring forward from the spear of my pursuers. On will I speed, far from the peril which hath been foretold; yet not for mine own sake will I do this, for I

am full of heaviness, and my heart is sore within me; but thou art young and fair, oh! brightest of the daughters of the Gentiles! Thy youth is as a tree which is planted beside a running water, which no man may pass without wonder at its exceeding beauty; and not for my sake shall the axe be laid to thy root, nor the knife lifted to thy branches; but ever when my soul panteth for rest, and my brow is hot with the strife which burns within, will I remember how the shadows of thy gracefulness once fell upon my spirit; and then will I sing unto thee the song of memory though thine ear hear it not; and tell of thy beauty and of thy virtue to all the tribes of Israel."

"We will talk more of this to-morrow;" said the Lady Rachel, as she wiped away the tears which were falling fast upon her cheek; "How little do they know thee, Miriam, who seek to do thee evil!"

"Thou weepest also, fair page;" said the Earl; "but this may not be: thou should'st assert thy manhood, and meet the sorrow bravely."

"'Tis for her I weep;" said the boy, glancing towards Miriam; "for the daughter of luxury made desolate—for the child of tenderness cast forth into the world alone—for the fond and the gentle with no one left to love her, save a helpless orphan who is unworthy to bear her company—I weep not for myself—mine will be a grief too deep for tears—a life-long sorrow which may not weaken itself by the wailing that is beseeming only to a passing trouble, and cannot be lessened by complaint."

"I can brook no more of this;" said the Earl, as he swept his hand across his eyes, and rose from his seat; "to-morrow we will commune more fully on this parting; till then, sweet ward, farewell—and thou too, maiden,

Jewess as thou art, can I not quit without a greeting; would that I could avert all evil from thy young head; but as it may not be, I can but wish that, till we meet again, all peace be with thee!"

Miriam folded her arms upon her breast, and bent her head low as the Earl spoke, nor did she alter her position until he had quitted the apartment.

Early on the morrow, even as he had promised, the Lord Pembroke returned to the presence of the Lady Rachel, but he found her alone, and in a grief which amounted to anguish—Miriam and the Page had fled together.

CHAPTER IV.

Weeks had passed away since the return of Sir Geoffrey Daventry, and his friends to Cheepsey, and still De Clancy shrank from his promised confidence to the Lady Mabel ; nor was it without extreme sorrow that she discovered how much the natural buoyancy and joyousness of his spirit was quenched by the indulgence of his secret grief. A cloud was for ever upon his

brow; and even the common courtesies and pursuits of life, when they tended to bring him into more immediate collision with his companions, had become distasteful and irksome; a few jests were at first bandied among the knights when this change of deportment was remarked, but as time appeared rather to deepen than to destroy his melancholy, they soon ceased to make merry at a gloom which had evidently prostrated the spirit of its victim.

For awhile De Clancy had indeed buoyed himself up with the hope that the Lady Rachel, after her first paroxysm of displeasure, would relent, and restore to him her affection; and the more readily, that when she came to look upon Miriam, and to listen to her high-souled sentiments, she would feel how impossible it was for a young and enthusiastic gallant to refuse worship at such a shrine. But day succeeded day, and week sped after week, and

there were no symptoms of relenting on the part of the Lady Delawere. Young, beautiful, and courted, the wound which had been inflicted on her pride was at least as sore as that which had smitten her heart; and although she admitted the claim of Miriam to most surpassing beauty; although, even woman as she was, she herself hung over her in admiration, and listened to her with delight, yet could she not brook that one who had loved *her*, should turn aside from his allegiance even to follow after the brightest star which ever lit up the world's path.

Nor was this all; for even while her heart bled, and her pride smarted, at the consciousness of De Clancy's defalcation, she was yet just to her own noble nature; and believing that one who had once knelt at so bright a shrine could never wholly withhold his worship, she resolved thenceforward to think of the young Baron only as the future husband of the Jewess.

To the protestations of Miriam, emphatic as they were in their denial, she lent no thought; for, satisfied that of herself she would never have resigned his love had he not compelled her to the sacrifice by his own falsehood, she believed it impossible that a promise, made in a moment of excitement, and uttered without reflection, could fetter the actions of such a creature as the daughter of Ben Abdel.—But the Lady Rachel did not yet fully comprehend the noble nature of the Jewess; who, fearless as she was in a good cause, yet shrank aghast from the very shadow of falsehood.

"What I have promised shall I not perform?" she asked, in reply to the expostulations of her friend; "Is not truth required from the lowliest, even as from the highest? When the wise man spake of the cedar of Lebanon, spake he not also of the hyssop that springeth out of the wall? Shall I forget mine own people and

my father's house; and, that I may escape a passage over the parched places of the wilderness, become as one having no share in the promised refuge?"

Yet still the Lady Rachel doubted:—

"Hearken to the voice of thy heart, Miriam;" she said, "in this at least, so sore a trial is beyond even thy strength."

"Lady;" replied the daughter of Ben Abdel with a sad smile; "when the damsels stand beside the fountain together, who can tell the weight of the water-cruise save she who lifts it when it hath been filled to the brim? I am content to bear my burthen."

Day after day the subject was renewed, yet the Jewess remained firm.

"But even I myself could talk thus," mused the Lady Rachel; "aye, though my heart were bursting! When the day of trial comes, Miriam will not, cannot resist his love—and I—but what

avails it to picture to my heart the waste which it will then be!"

Had De Clancy guessed how deeply he was yet beloved by his fair mistress—how devotedly she hung upon the memory of his perfections, and how bitterly she wept his falsehood, his brow would have been less dark, and his self-upbraidings less severe; but, conscious how little his own vacillating affections had deserved such love, he abandoned himself to a regret as profound as it was hopeless. That blent with his memories of the Lady Rachel, came others in which the image of Miriam stood brightly forward, may not be denied; but while his thoughts rested in calm sadness on the recollections of the soft moon-lighted beauty of his Christian mistress—while he clung to her idea, as the parching wanderer of the desert clings to the memory of the green oasis beside which he lately lingered—he shrank from every remi-

niscence of the Jewess, for on each and all a cloud rested; even in their first days of passion, his treachery had cast a shadow around her young loveliness, and a blight upon her path—and since they parted as those only can part who have loved in vain, with how many terrible recollections was not her image associated! And yet he could not forget her:—nay, when she was near him—when he looked on her queenlike beauty, and turned fom the flashing of her brilliant eyes, again he felt the rush of passion sweep across his soul. But circumstances had combined with nature to fling a majesty and an awfulness around the daughter of Ben Abdel, from which they who loved her not worthily shrank back dismayed, nor could they as they dwelt only upon her beauty, perceive how pure a gem was shrined in the bright casket —how gentle was the woman-heart which beat in that proud bosom!

Let it not, however, be implied that it was thus that De Clancy had loved her; during the brief period in which passion had o'ermastered his reason, he had never looked into the future; but satisfied with the happiness of being beside her, feeling that for him her beauty was set forth with greater care, that her bright eyes became more bright, and her soft tones yet more subdued, he had suffered the present to become all in all to him; nor was it until he awoke from his temporary hallucination, that he remembered how deeply he had, by this weak self-indulgence, sacrificed the best feelings of one who had trusted in him.

That the Jewess loved him with a fervour and devotion which might have satisfied the most exacting nature, De Clancy could not deny even to himself; and what return had he to offer for so pure, so uncalculating a passion? The result has been already seen; and if, in his

anxiety to weaken an affection which he had so recklessly called forth, he drew upon himself the contempt of Miriam by the confession that he loved another, he at least acted upon a principle of honour, which, though it had previously slumbered, had never been entirely extinct.

To paint the anguish of the high-hearted Jewess when she first learnt that she had been made the toy of a Christian's leisure hours, and the puppet of a false lover's sophistry, were impossible. The recoil of her best feelings—the sense of self-abasement—the consciousness of self-delusion—the prostration alike of hope and of affection—made her brain whirl, and her heart sink; and, not until she had avowed to her father the extent of her error, and the sacredness of her resolve never again to look with love upon a Christian, was she restored to a sense of self-respect, and that calmness of despair which was comparative happiness when contrasted with the first paroxysm of misery.

It was early in the evening of one of the last days of October, when the Lord of Cheepsey and his guests were yet seated at the revel, that De Clancy and his sister paced to and fro the stately terrace which stretched along beside the Abbey; the majestic trees by which it was fringed had almost shed their leaves, and there was a chilliness in the clear blue sky now rapidly deepening into twilight, and in the low breeze which sighed along the branches above their heads, which made the Lady Mabel fold her velvet mantle yet closer about her, as she moved along beside the Baron. The sear leaves crackled beneath their feet as they walked, and the bats whirled round their heads, imparting a more than usual melancholy to the hour.

"Thou art surely to blame in this, dear Edgar," said the lady, as they turned at the extremity of the terrace; "did'st thou confide to me the secret of thy grief, I might chance to

suggest to thee some comfort; but now I can only weep as I mark thy wasting cheek and heavy eye, at mine own inability to help thee."

"None can help me;" said De Clancy gloomily: "and even from thee, sweet Mabel, I would fain withhold all mine uneasiness:— I had looked to have overcome it ere now."

"And so thou would'st have done, Edgar;" replied the lady; "had'st thou striven more manfully against it. Wherefore dost thou not wend to Westminster, and seek an interview with Rachel? Believe me, no woman ever loved as she has done, who might not be brought to pardon every sin save one."

"And that one?"

"A slight on her own perfections; the placing another above her for a season; and of that folly, at least, thou art guiltless." And the lady looked keenly at the young Baron as she made the assertion.

"And is such slight never forgiven?" he asked.

"Nay, I would scarcely affirm so much; but it is assuredly difficult to forgive, dear Edgar, nor easily forgotten—it asks alike time and tenderness to blot it out."

"I would not be a niggard of either, had I a prospect of success."

"How say'st thou?" asked the Lady Mabel; "Can this indeed have been? She should be a damsel of birth and honour who could so wile thee from thine allegiance to the fair Rachel—"

"Neither boasts she the one nor the other, sweet sister; nay, her name is a reproach among the proud, and her lineage a disgrace among the powerful—"

"Then is the tale true that I have heard, Edgar De Clancy:" said the lady of Cheepsey reproachfully; "and my only brother hath disgraced alike himself and me—I scouted the ru-

mour when it reached me first, as a foul slander, designed to wound thee in the tenderest point—I would not even let it reach thine ears, lest murder should ensue—yet it would seem that I have been over chary of thy good name."

"I thank thee not the less for thine affection;" said the Baron; "and the rather that perchance I may now have lost it for ever."

"Not so, Edgar:" murmured the lady sorrowfully; "come what may to thee—sorrow, abandonment, even disgrace—though all the world fall from thee, I will at least cling to thee through all. Wert thou not alike father, brother, and friend to me, when all else were in the grave? Did I not confide to thee every thought of my young heart, every hope of my first affection? was it not thy hand which joined mine to that of my gallant lord? and shall I ever forget all that I owe thee?"

"Forbear, Mabel;" said the Baron moved

by her unusual energy; "our theme in this hour is of my errors. Yes, sweet sister:—I have loved—a Jewess! One of the persecuted race—the daughter of an Israelite."

"It was a passing madness!" whispered Mabel.

"In very sooth it might be; yet when had madness ever such excuse! I will not paint her, Mab; I cannot make thee comprehend her beauty; rich, sparkling, deep, yet gentle as thine own—and I have seen her! Mabel, when first we met, the hour might be as this: the blending of the daylight with the darkness, I had played deep, and lost, more it may be than I had power to pay, and my yet haughty honour was at stake. I had but one resource—to pawn my lands—I see thee shudder, Mab, but hear me out. Among the tribes a name was whispered to me as that of one who, stern, uncompromising, grasping though he was, yet boasted

honesty; and this to one who looked ere long to redeem all he pledged, was much; to him I bent my steps, but though prepared for usury and griping avarice, he far outran my fears. Had it been added life at which he grasped, he could not have displayed more eagerness to clutch his prize; yet anxious as he was to wring even to the last coin from the open palm of the spendthrift, he was yet cautious; and thus time wore on, and I became still more importunate. One evening I sought his hovel, for to me it had appeared such, where I was wont to remain closeted with him in a narrow room lit by one untrimmed lamp;—Ben Abdel was abroad; and yet on this evening was I not refused admittance, but rather urged to tarry until his return, which was looked for speedily; and thus I followed listlessly the guidance of the withered woman who kept the gate, cursing in my inmost spirit the roving habits of the Jew, when a door

was suddenly opened, and having conducted me across the threshold, the aged crone withdrew, and left me standing before Ben Abdel's daughter—Mabel, it seemed enchantment! The gorgeous arrangement of the chamber, the soft voluptuousness of the veiled light, the delicate odours which floated about me like a cloud; but above all, the sparkling superb beauty of the female, who reclined on a pile of costly cushions in a garb half eastern, and half regal—formed a picture on which I could have gazed for ever; but when the soft low voice uttered a welcome—when the rich lips parted to display teeth only less dazzling than the eyes—when the rounded arm was stretched forth, and the small jewelled hand motioned me to a seat not far distant from her own—then indeed my heart beat high, for I felt that upon loveliness like this I had never before looked. I forgot that diamonds were blazing

on her brow—that gems encircled her arms, and clasped her slender ancles—that her folded turban was bright with many colours—and that she was pillowed upon velvet—I saw only herself—I beheld only the high smooth brow where the blood mantled in volumes as she bade me welcome—the large and flashing eyes which glanced in the soft light like meteors, and the slight and rounded form whose every motion was gracefulness—enough that ere we parted I loved her madly; as men ever love when passion and fancy do the work of time!"

"An usurer's daughter!" murmured the lady.

"Oh! speak not thus of the heiress of Ben Abdel!" exclaimed De Clancy; "of the brightest gem that man could wear upon his brow—of the high-souled, pure-hearted Miriam!"

"Did she not delude thee into love?" asked the Lady Mabel disdainfully.

"Never!—I was self-thralled—Not a word, not a look ever escaped her which saints might not have witnessed, until upon my knees I told my passion, and craved for a return—and then she loved me—loved me, and trusted me—and think how I repaid her! With her own hoarded gold had she redeemed my lands from Ben Abdel's keeping—with her best confidence, her fullest faith had she repaid my passion—with a tenderness as fervent as it was faithful had she clung to me—and her recompense was—treachery! A lucky stroke of fortune restored my losses: an interval of reflection recalled my prudence; a sense of what I owed alike to myself and to my race, brought back upon me the conviction of disgrace—I feared the anger of my sister, the contempt of my fellow-nobles, the ban of my church; and then, Mabel, came the memory of Rachel Delawere; the fair, the highborn Rachel,

who had loved me so long, and whom I had so ill-requited; and I hesitated no longer—I rushed to the presence of Miriam; I poured out the forfeit-gold in her lap; I spoke hurriedly, perhaps harshly, for I told her all—and we parted, but not in tears; for the daughter of Ben Abdel scorned to weep at the off-falling of an ingrate. She had no grief to waste in words or murmurings; hers was the proud sorrow of a heart too haughty to relieve itself by idle violence.—Had she reproached me, I could have scorned her weakness; had she reviled me, I could have despised her violence: but our parting was one without hope, and without passion—a cold and silent severing of ties never to be reunited."

"Did ye then never meet again?" asked the lady of Cheepsey, anxious despite her pride; "surely such a parting should not be final—"

"We did, Mabel; not as we had previously

met, amid luxury and ease, surrounded by all the appliances of wealth, by all the indulgences of anxious affection; but in a sunken chamber beneath the ruins of Ben Abdel's dwelling, on that night of fear and flame which carried desolation to the hearths and homes of his people. He had been conveyed thither, wounded and bleeding, by the pious care of his daughter; of that fair and delicate Miriam, whose only task had hitherto been to string gems, or to weave mimic flowers with many tinted silks. The work of murder was yet rife above when I discovered the place of their retreat: Mabel, I shudder as I recal the scene! The dead body of Ben Abdel lay pale and ghastly on the earth; the aged crone, of whom I have already made mention, cowered in a distant corner, maddened by her fears; while the young Jewess—the woman whom I had loved—was struggling in the grasp of a ruffian, whose rude clasp was to her more bitter than a thousand deaths—"

"But thou did'st save her, Edgar," gasped his sister: "she did not—she could not perish thus!"

"By Our Lady's grace, she did not; yet was not mine all the blessedness of saving her; she had already wrought nobly in her own cause. At her feet, sweet sister, lay a wretch struck to the heart by the dagger which was yet in her hand—beside her was stretched Ben Abdel, dead—and she stood there, awful in her young beauty, amid the ruin of all that had once been dear to her, and thanked me as her deliverer—I, who had smitten the first blow by which she had been withered!—I could scarce listen, Mabel, to those cold and courtly thanks; for even then, steeped as she was in misery to the very lips, the tone in which she breathed them was slow and measured; she forgot not even for a moment how I had wronged her; and although her gratitude was sincere, it was too stately to satisfy a heart ready to renew its homage."

"Yet thou did'st not venture by light words to profane her sorrow?"

"Alas! Mabel; I may not say thee nay: in the anxious agony of my spirit, the memories of the past came back upon me; but Miriam pointed to the rude grave of her father, and rebuked the trifler who would have whispered passion beside the new-made corpse."

"And went she forth with thee?"

"Not until she had seen the head of Ben Abdel laid in the earth, and even then she trusted me no more; with cold composure she asked whither I would lead her, and when she learnt my purpose, she walked sternly on without a tear, among the ruins of her home, and the homes of those who had cherished her."

"And where did'st thou seek shelter for the child of sorrow?" again asked the lady: "Had I been near thee then—"

"To thee I would have brought her;" said

De Clancy, as he raised to his lips the hand which rested on his arm; "but thou, sweet Mab, wert distant; and thus I turned to one who was as dear to me—"

"Thou did'st surely not bear her to the home of Rachel?"

"In very sooth I did—and even though a rumour of my falsehood had reached my most fair mistress, I feared not for my suit. Sorrow is ever sacred in the eyes of Rachel Delawere; nor was I without hope that constant communion with Miriam might ensure to me a pardon which mere words would fail to win. I knew that they had met before, and that the proud heiress would welcome the young Jewess as a sister; nor was I self-deceived—when the hand of Miriam was clasped in that of Rachel, the heart was a party in the pledge; and then, Mabel, I gloried in my daring, for I had saved one who loved me, and laid her on the bosom of one I loved!"

"'Twas a bold step:"said the lady thoughtfully; "and yet 'twas worthy of thee; thou did'st no more than justice to her noble nature: even thus would Rachel Delawere herself have trusted: thou hast read her well; and for this at least she will hold herself thy debtor."

"Mabel:" said the young Baron energetically; "in thee alone have I now hope: should'st thou fail, Rachel is lost to me."

"A stranger page craves parley with my Lord De Clancy,"—said an attendant, and the Baron moved aside to receive his mission.

CHAPTER V.

The youth came not forward with the elastic tread of one whose heaviest care was the furtherance of his lady's whimsies, or the guidance of her palfrey; neither did he wear the quaint and rich attire so common to his calling; but his garb and his step were alike sober and measured; and even when he stood within two paces of the noble, he still retained

his feathered cap. In person he was tall and slight, and the trifling constraint which was perceptible in his motions, failed to destroy their gracefulness. His face was scarcely visible, for the dark plume fell far over his brow, and the collar of marten fur which surmounted his cloak, completed a disguise which had not altogether the effect of accident. But this affectation of concealment was by no means uncommon at the time among the pages of the nobility, who loved to assume the semblance of mystery and importance, even where their missions boasted neither the one attribute nor the other; and the Baron merely smiled as the boy bent his head respectfully, and remained bonnetted.

"Whence art thou, Sir Page; and what is thine errand?" he asked after a momentary scrutiny of the new-comer.

For all reply the boy drew from beneath

his cloak a scarf of green and gold, and placed it in the hands of the Baron.

"Ha! from the Lady Rachel!" exclaimed De Clancy earnestly: "speak on, fair page—nay, pause not; this noble dame is the lady of Cheepsey and my sweet sister; from her I have no secrets."

"That scarf," said the boy in a subdued tone; "was woven by a fond mistress for a favoured suitor; thou hast not yet forgotten it. It was wrought amid smiles and flatteries—and the freshness and the glitter are upon it still. 'Twas a fair token, and well-fitted to its purpose; but alas! that purpose failed ere the task was ended. The lover proved faithless, and it was folded about the brow of a friend who wept tear for tear with the betrayed one. But when did love-token ever beseem the sacredness of friendship? The flower and the fruit ripen not together—the roses of summer will not blossom

among the hoar-frosts of the bleak season—the singing-birds are silent in the leafless woods —and the friend would now fain make a peace messenger of the glittering folly, and bind heart to heart once more in its shining folds."

"Miriam!" murmured De Clancy, as the voice ceased; "can this indeed be thee?"

"Even as thou sayest:" was the reply, as the Jewess withdrew the bonnet from her brow, and cast off the ample mantle; "it is indeed I—Thou did'st not look to see me again on this earth; and yet, behold! I seek thee. In my happier days I should have fled from thee, and blushed when I surprized thy name upon my lips, or thy memory in my heart; but now, when I stand alone, when I can never again look love upon any on this earth, I seek thee, alike for thine own sake, and for that of another who is most dear to me. De Clancy, let a solitary victim suffice to thy vanity: forget not, as thou

dwellest among thine own people, and thine own kindred, that there is one afar off, who weeps thy desertion with bitter tears. The day is long to the mourner, and weary is the night to those who are watchers for the dawn :—grief withers up the young beauty of the early-smitten, and dims the brightness of the clearest eye. Yet the day ends at last to the weeper, the dawn comes to the heavy-hearted, and joy can dissipate the shadows of past evil, when it once more gladdens the spirit. Happy art thou that with thee are the light and the rest, the comfort and the oblivion. Return then to the fond one who even amid thy falsehood hath not forgotten thee ; nor deem that because a frown is upon her brow, the coldness hath extended to her heart.—Doth not the solitary bird ever pine in its watchfulness when its mate hath fled to the green wood, and made him a home in a strange place ?"

"Miriam," exclaimed the Baron earnestly; "Wherefore art thou here? Dost thou bring me hope?"

"Hath she not loved thee?" asked the Jewess in reply; "and is not woman ever prone to trust?"

"Maiden," said the Lady Mabel kindly; "I would that for thine own fair sake she had chosen another messenger."

"And wherefore?" demanded Miriam; "Had she indeed sent me, she could not have trusted one who would have served her more faithfully; but mine errand is mine own. I have seen the daughter of the Gentiles in the dust—the fire quenched on her hearth, and her household gods shivered about her—I have heard her sighs, and looked upon her tears, and her sorrow hath brought heaviness to mine own spirit. She had received me when I was desolate,—sheltered me when I was houseless,—aye, even

loved me when she knew that the arrow which was yet in her heart had been buried there for my sake—Could I then sit by in silence to see her suffer? He had told me that he loved her, and my path was plain. This may not be, I murmured to myself, the bruised reed must not be broken — the withered blossom must not be scattered—the wounded heart must be led again into the green pastures, and laid beside the still waters—I must yet see her ere I die, once more coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved. And even as I have said, so must it be, my Lord De Clancy. As the gentianella taketh its tint from the blue sky to which its blossom is ever uplifted, so should light return to the eyes of the daughter of the Gentiles, from gazing on the smile of her heart's chosen one."

"Could I but think that this might indeed be—" commenced the Baron.

"Doubt it not;" murmured Miriam, as she covered her eyes with her small hands, and the rich blood crimsoned her brow; "It is I who tell thee this. I, who have watched her in her solitude as a mother watches her first-born—I, who have loved as she loves, suffered as she suffers—I tell thee this, ere I depart to dwell in the tents of my people, and in the hollows of the rock in which my tribe have made unto themselves a home and a refuge. Though I fled away upon the wings of the morning, yet could I not be at rest, while I remembered that the evil which had come by me to one who had cherished me, still existed. It is for this that I have paused in my pilgrimage, and turned aside from my onward path—It is for this that I have come even here, face to face with one whom I never looked to meet again—that where I was once loved, I may now be despised, for having done that which may seem unmaidenly—but I care not for this, if I fulfil my purpose."

"It is a holy one;" murmured De Clancy; "nor can it fail, when hallowed thus by thy pure agency. Miriam; I ask thee not to pardon me—I am unworthy of such a love as thine; yet if the worship of a grateful heart, rebuked by its own error, may still be poured out in its fulness at thy feet—"

"Forbear, my Lord De Clancy;" said the Jewess; "words avail nothing. My mission here is ended, and henceforth each must be a stranger to the other."

"Maiden;" said the Lady Mabel, as she took the hand of the Jewess; "how do I honour thee! Would that my brother, when he spoke the lip-deep words of passion in which the heart had slight share, and bowed down his fancy before a beauty which should have been overlooked in his worship of thy still brighter mind; would that he had remembered how he was about to wrong a high and noble

nature—But we will not talk of this, Miriam; we will rather thank thee for the good service with which thou hast repaid the injury; and promise thee, that should the Lady Delawere never become the bride of De Clancy, it shall be that such is her own free will. My brother hath hitherto despaired, but now he will once more hope; Rachel hath much to forgive, but thou had'st even more, and hast forgiven."

"Lady;" said the Jewess, as she raised to her lips the hand which still clasped her's; "I thank thee that thou hast judged thus kindly of me—Now can I rejoice and be glad with an exceeding gladness, for my trial is overpast, and mine hour of rest is come.—I have run my race like a swift steed, and like an arrow shot by a strong arm have I pursued my course—And lo! the goal is reached; and the bread which was leavened with the leaven of bitterness may I eat in peace. When I am far hence, and the

shadow gathers upon my spirit, I will look back upon the past as upon a glorious dream, from which the waking was heavy, but whose memory can lend wings to my soul. I ask not to forget the days of my pride, and of my pleasantness; I seek not to blot out the record of my bright youth; for then the songs of my spirit were set to a sweet melody, and the strong man rested upon his spear and upon his shield as he listened. — The waters of misery have since passed over me; the stain of blood was on them, and they were salt with tears, yet will I hold fast the memory of my morning—the record of my early years will I not suffer to fade away."

"Whither would'st thou wend, Miriam?" asked De Clancy; "The home of thy father is laid low, the dwellings of thy people are in ruins, and thy tribe is scattered over the nation. Thy path is beset with peril, and danger hovers about thy footsteps; wherefore, then, hast thou quitted the home of the Lady Rachel?"

"I left her," said Miriam calmly; "even from the same cause as thou did'st once leave me—because I was a Jewess, and that there was alike danger and dishonour in my affection. Care not for me, my Lord De Clancy; the name of Ben Abdel was pleasant in the ears of the tribes of Israel; and I have had tidings of one who loved my father, and who for his sake will protect me. I have been for a time an alien from my people, and the shadows of self-reproach lie long upon my spirit. The days are evil for the children of Israel, and yet I have abode in safety and in honour when they were suffering persecution and disgrace—I go to share in their fortunes."

"Miriam;" said De Clancy, "in the days of my necessity it was thy hand which was outstretched to me in help; refuse not then to be assisted in thy turn—How may I serve thee?"

"By loving thy young bride as man never

before loved woman: by repaying unto her not only thine own debt of affection, but mine also—for myself, I need nothing."

"Dost *thou* bid me love her, Miriam?" exclaimed the young Baron; "thou, whose youth is as a dream which is spent ere the eye of the sleeper is scarce sealed? How may I repay thee for so pure a generosity?"

"By forgetting me—by letting my memory pass away even as the dream to which thou hast likened my past life—I go to fulfil my duty to my people."

"Would that thou wert a Christian!" murmured the Lady Mabel.

"Lady," said the Jewess with a sickly smile; "mine experience of thy creed hath been a bitter one—name it not to the orphan daughter of Ben Abdel—to the deceived mistress of DeClancy—to the denounced wanderer who flies from the home of her last friend, lest she bring

down ruin upon the fair and upon the innocent, whose only crime hath been that she hath loved a Jewess—the faith of my fathers sufficeth me."

"Thou wilt advise us of thy whereabout?" said De Clancy; "thou wilt not refuse to let us repeat our thanks when thy care hath restored peace to our hearth, and brought a blessing upon our home?"

"Even so;" replied the Jewess; "what matters it to any where the wounded bird may fold her wing? the wild wood is wide enough for all; while her plumage is gay, and her song joyous, men may look on her with gladness; but when she seeketh only a place to die in, then let her die alone."

"Talk not thus, Miriam;" expostulated De Clancy, as he took her hand: "so many hearts are open to thee, that thou should'st not thus coldly cast back their affection. The Lady Mabel will cherish thee like a sister.

"Tempt me not;" replied Miriam, as she withdrew the hand which he had taken: "Am I not one of the persecuted? and shall I shrink from beside my people when the dark hour hath fallen upon them? Not so, my Lord De Clancy; the promise is mighty, and it will be fulfilled—Is it not said that he who is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem? And shall I turn my back upon the prophecy, and coldly cast from me the assurance which it holds out? Rather let me depart, and rejoice that my day of deliverance is so near at hand."

"We shall not forget thee, maiden:" said the Lady Mabel: "and should the day come when thou hast need of us, ask freely, for we owe thee much."

"Ye have repaid me all;" said Miriam;

"all, aye, and more than all, for ye have spoken kindly to one who hath indeed need of kindness. Oh! lady, may'st thou never know the welcome with which the unhappy greet a gentle word spoken in season! It is as the dew of Hermon—as the precious ointment—as the manna of the wilderness—the heart must have grown old in sorrow ere it can estimate its worth."

"Dost thou wend to thy new home alone, maiden?" asked the Lady.

"Not so; I have one to bear me company;" said Miriam; "one whom it will be easy for me to love and to cherish; he is of mine own faith, he hath been cast upon the world even as I was, and he hath found succour from the same hand."

"Speak'st thou of the Lady Mabel's page?"

"I do; he also is put forth: for the High Priests of your people like him not; and I

deemed it better that the child should set out upon his pilgrimage while it was yet day, than await the coming of the twilight."

"But the boy will rather need than yield protection!" said De Clancy.

"So be it;" answered Miriam; "the weak woman will uphold the yet weaker stripling—there will be the more need of energy, and I shall have the less space in which to dwell upon my own griefs."

"Let us at least forward thee upon thy journey;" said the Lady Mabel; "lest thou faint by the way."

"Rather let me go forth alone;" said the Jewess; "I have no fear for myself; a home awaits me, and though it be among strangers, they are of mine own faith, and will give me freely welcome. The good Rabbi who was my father's friend will be mine also."

"Rest thee nevertheless, awhile maiden,

and refresh thyself ere thou preparest again to set forth;" said the Lady; "thou art unused to travel."

"My time is precious;" was the reply; "mine enemies may be even now upon my track, and the poor child awaits me hard-by. In pity to his helplessness I must be speedy."

"And shall we never meet again, Miriam?" asked De Clancy, as he once more extended his hand.

"Never on earth, I trust;" replied the Jewess calmly, as she laid her own within it: "I have to-day performed a duty, nor do I at this moment shrink from the confession that it hath been a painful one; the wound which is torn open, bleeds afresh. I am but a weak woman; firm in spirit, but feeble of heart—Farewell, my Lord De Clancy: I would ask of thee to forget me, save in some moment of hap-

piness, and then to remember only how fervently the poor Jewess prayed in her own spirit-void that it might be even thus!"

The Lady Mabel, deeply touched by the words of the pale and excited Miriam, burst into tears, and looked anxiously towards her brother; but the Baron had for the last few weeks suffered so severely from the idea that Rachel Delawere was lost to him, that not even the voice of one whom he had loved for a time so madly as the daughter of Ben Abdel, could at this moment divert him from his allegiance. It might be, too, that the disguise of the Jewess did much to weaken the spell of her beauty; it is at least certain, that when Miriam withdrew her hand he made no effort to retain it; but appeared rather to be dwelling in imagination on the picture which her words had presented to his mind, than on her who had uttered them.

"Farewell then, noblest of women;" said the Lady Mabel, as she prest her lips to the high forehead which grew crimson from the contact; "May the evil through which thou hast already passed be all which thou art fated to endure—and may the home which is promised to thee prove one of happiness and peace!"

"I do not hope so much, Lady;" said Miriam sadly; "life is to me like a winter landscape, of which the outline alone remains, while the bright and the beautiful have passed away. Afar off in the distance there may be a spot of light, but about me all is bleak, and barren, and joyless."

As she spoke, she flung the mantle once more about her, and drew the bonnet lower on her brow; then, bending down upon her knee, she raised the hand of the Lady Mabel to her lips, and murmured out a blessing. And when at length she rose, she stood for an

instant in silence, with clasped hands and bowed-down head, gazing earnestly upon De Clancy; but the weakness lasted only a moment: in the next she bounded forward, and vaulting lightly from the terrace, disappeared through the open portal.

CHAPTER VI.

We have once more to introduce our readers to the Franciscan and De Tracy, and again at the same hour of growing twilight; for, fearful of their intercourse becoming subject of comment in the household of their host, the wily confederates ever met when the other guests of Sir Geoffrey were assembled at the banquet, or engaged in converse with the Lady Mabel in her own apartments.

On the present occasion, these well-assorted companions had adjourned to the private room of the monk, where they were surrounded by all the solemn accessories suited to the locality. The floor was partially overlaid with tapestry, on which was wrought the Judgment of Solomon, in many-coloured threads. In the centre of the apartment stood a heavy table of curiously carved oak, inlaid on the surface with ebony, and scattered over with missals quaintly illuminated, a crucifix of ivory with a Christ of silver, a skull, an hour-glass, and a rosary. Around the room hung some coarsely executed effigies of saints, principally martyrs in the agonies of their martyrdom, carefully surrounded by all the revolting, and not infrequently, disgusting attributes of their sacrifice; while a full-length figure of the Virgin Mary, carved in wood, and coloured to the life, gorgeously apparelled in silk damask, and mounted

on a bracket, stood out, like the genius of the locality, immediately opposite to the door of entrance.

Such were the ornaments of an apartment in which the Franciscan was supposed to spend a considerable portion of his time in piety and prayer; while mingled, though not blent, with these fantastic and coarsely-selected decorations, the eye was attracted by deep rich cornices of carved oak, the original embellishments of the noble apartment; a lofty window of the purest Saxon, and of the most gorgeous colouring; and an ample chimney, whose huge supporters were two griffins clasping a shield, on which were emblazoned the arms of the Daventrys.

"And hast thou truly pondered all that I lately told thee?" asked the monk, as he closed the door, and returned with stealthy pace to the side of the Knight; "hast thou weighed thy poor remain of honour against thy rich

prospect of success, and found the balance of the former, light? Trust me, De Tracy, thou dost but play thy part consistently in this sunshiny world of ours, where virtue ever kicks the beam when placed in the opposite scale to ambition. Once I had mine own doubts and struggles, and tried, fool that I was! to coax conscience into a compromise with profit; but when I failed, I e'en set the jade fairly at defiance, and though she grumbled for awhile, as is ever the fashion with her sex when we are awearied of them, I closed my ears against her reproaches, and at last rid myself of her altogether. Thou hast been long at war with the same enemy, or I wrong thee; and hast now a fair opportunity to shake off the yoke of the shrew, and become a free man."

"'Tis an ugly jest!" said De Tracy.

"'Tis thine own coward heart which makes it so;" retorted the monk; "To the trembling

fool who keeps the midnight vigil of a craven, the cricket's chirp is a death-watch, and the owl's cry the shriek of a restless fiend. We must have done with this; I will have no half-measures. Or thou art with me heart and hand, or I will have none of thee—Why did'st thou tell me that thou wert resolved, when thou can'st thus be scared by a word?"

"It is easier to sin, than to bring ourselves to call our transgression by its proper name when we have sinned." said Sir Reginald.

"Aye;" sneered the monk; "thou would'st deck the dark waters which are to overwhelm thee, in a garb of ice, that so the sun may make a rainbow on them, and thou may'st perish handsomely! Or, like the solitary bee which lines her subterranean cell with the scarlet leaves of the poppy, struggle to make darkness appear light—'tis a worthy effort."

"I am not so weak;" said the Knight dog-

gedly; "yet I cannot bring myself to talk as thou dost."

"Can'st thou *act?*" demanded the monk.

"Doubt me not;" was the reply; "Hath not my life been one of daring and of danger? Even if I have failed in teaching men to love me, I have at least taught them to fear. Doubt not then but I can act as boldly as thyself when there is need."

"Say rather when it may advantage thee;" followed up the Franciscan; "say this, and I can believe thee, good De Tracy: aye, believe thee, and I yield not my faith lightly. But there is no bond which fetters man to his purpose like self-interest; 'tis the very touchstone of the soul —it attaches him to his task, as amber gathers straws. While thou can'st serve thyself, I have no fear that thou wilt play me false.''

"We waste time in words;" said the Knight impatiently.

"Nay, not so;" smiled the monk, as he glanced round the apartment; "Are we not in right godly company? Art thou not sharing the pious solitude of the holy Father Dominick? What would'st thou more?"

"Thus dost thou ever baffle me!" exclaimed De Tracy; "Did'st thou not say that thou had'st news for me?"

"Aye, marry;" replied the monk; "and though my jest was ugly, so are not my tidings; the Jewish Miriam hath been here."

"Who say'st thou?" exclaimed the Knight; "the daughter of Ben Abdel?"

"Even that most fair Jewess—and more—I have learnt that the young De Clancy hath played her false, to woo the Lady Delawere—I could not but smile, as from my hiding-place I saw them fooling their hearts with the belief that they could part, and forget that they had loved; while Sir Geoffrey's bride stood by, and

wept—women are apt with tears—the Baron looked neither to the right nor to the left; he had given his heart to the broad lands of the heiress, and his fancy to the fair daughter of Israel; and, bewildered like a child between two new toys, he seemed as though he scarce knew which to chuse. But thou should'st have seen the Jewess, De Tracy, as she stood between them in the habit of a page,—by my faith, she made a most fair stripling! with a bright eye and a light foot well fitted to a lady's bower-chamber."

"But why came she here?" asked the Knight.

The low, mocking laughter of Father Dominick hissed athwart the chamber as he replied: "On an errand worthy of an errant damsel—she came to restore her own lost lover to his allegiance to her rival!—For awhile I feared lest he should prefer the messenger,

but all ended well; and she departed as she came."

"I marvel not that he loved her;" murmured the Knight, "for she is fair to a wonder."

"He should not have wedded her had she been ten times more so;" was the response; "Curse on the meddling fool that he let her not perish with her father!"

"Say'st thou so?" exclaimed Sir Reginald; "and wherefore?"

"'Tis a long history;" replied the monk; "and one which may not be lightly told."

"Dost thou still fear me?"

"Fear thee!" echoed the Franciscan, in a tone of sarcasm; "fear *thee*, poor worm? Go to;—there breathes not one upon this earth who can make my heart quail—If I must vail my spirit, it shall be to a nobler, mightier influence than that of man—Reginald De Tracy;" he

added after a brief pause, as his eye rolled slowly round the apartment; "If indeed the spirits which hear, would answer—if the cloud-seated demon who shrouds the world in darkness by the unfurling of his vast wings, and who by this slight effort flings over the earth the gloom which men call night, and through which they slumber on in their besotted blindness, unconscious of its cause—if He stood palpably before me in his awful might, perchance I then might fear—If the spirit whose voice is heard among the forest-boughs, when the storm is rife, were to lay bare before me the secrets of the world which it inhabits—perchance I then might fear—Nay, if the very hidden influences which here surround us—even here in this very room—and which neither closed doors nor sealed casements can exclude—if even they stood visibly in my path, I might fear them till I learnt their purpose; yet were

the boon of intercourse with such a race cheaply purchased even by that coward fear."

"No more of this, I pray thee;" said Sir Reginald: "it suits neither my humour, nor the hour which thou hast chosen; I am content to war with man."

"Strange!" soliloquised the monk, as he sat with folded arms, gazing upon the skull which stood on the table beside him: "It is strange how poor humanity shrinks even from a knowledge of herself; well then may she be forgiven that she will seek no further—How many cheeks would blench even at the sight of thee, thou grinning remnant of what once was life!" and he drew the skull nearer to him as he spoke; "Aye, though perchance when these vacant circles were filled with life, and the light which is born of life, and this poor bone was cased in flesh, and the teeth shewed white and dazzling between the red lips which veiled this ghastly jaw

—though then, perchance, man set thee at nought, and laughed thy power to scorn: now when thou can'st not even look thy displeasure, nor plead for thine own dues, the craven fears thee in his turn— he turns away his eyes with a heart-sickness, for the sight of thee is to him as a homily against his own self-love—and he shivers at the thought of thee, because thou art walking in spirit the land of mighty influences, from which he is himself shut out.——But I cry thee grace, my good Sir Reginald!" he exclaimed suddenly; "I had forgotten thy presence, and that such discourse may be unpleasing to thee—Where did we quit our subject?"

"I bade thee trust me."

"True—I recal the passage—" said the Franciscan: "but how if I disregard thy bidding?"

"E'en follow thine own pleasure;" returned the Knight; "I am awearied of this midsummer madness," and he rose from his seat.

"Listen;" said the monk, as he forced him back into his chair: "I am in the mood to tell thee a wild tale.——Thou may'st have heard, Sir Knight, as I doubt not but thou hast, the name of one Sir Piercy Chepinstow, a noted courtier in the days of Henry; and withal, no mean warrior when need was; but held to be as able with his steel as with his tongue."

"To many a tale have I listened of which he was the theme;" said De Tracy; "he died, as I have heard, over seas."

"The same;" said the Franciscan; "so also have I been told; though, until men whispered to me his foreign death, and pitied him that he had neither wife nor kinsman to close his eyes, I had believed that he yet existed. This Knight, such as he hath been described to thee, lived long in ignorance of all passion, save that with which he loved his weapon, and his war-horse; and in ignorance of all melody, save the clang

of armour, and the clashing of weapons: but the time came at length when he was better taught: when he flung away the blade from his thigh, and the bridle from his hand, to sit at the feet of a fair dame, looking into her eyes, and listening to her low voice; and proud was that noble damsel, that she had thralled the stout Knight who had so long set her sex at nought, and thwarted all their hopes. How devotedly he loved her! with all the energy of a spirit which was poured forth for the first time, and which recklessly exhausted its wealth upon one object, careless of all besides. Such a suitor could not linger long for a reply:—He won her—aye, won her, in as far as plighted vow and oft-repeated pledge could win a woman; and he trusted her with a trust worthy of a steadier faith—But I have not told thee all;" pursued the monk with a bitter laugh: "I have not told thee aught, for I have forgotten

to tell thee that the Knight was poor! His ancestors had pawned their lands in the service of their Sovereigns, and in the upholding of their own honour; and thus Sir Piercy inherited, with a proud name, only the struggle to support it. Yet, in the pride of her power, the maiden forgot his poverty, nor did its memory grow upon her until a new gallant arrived at Court—one who was rich in lands, and gold, and heirship, — and whose claim to a lady's heart danced in his lofty plume, and his bright eyes—He saw her—loved her—wooed her—and yet Sir Piercy trusted — He laid before her father a proud statement of his wealth, and the old man was dazzled — yet still Sir Piercy trusted—And well might he trust, for she had vowed that without his love she cared not to exist longer in a cold and selfish world—Well might he trust her, when she hung upon his bosom, and murmured out the words which women

whisper when they are fond and faithful,—for he knew not that such words were ever uttered to deceive.—It is a lesson which man learns but once, and Sir Piercy learnt it in his first wooing. He did not reproach her when she told him that her father had promised to bestow her hand upon Sir Aubrey Daventry, and that he was a stern man whom she feared even now, as she had done in her first infancy: he could not reproach her, for even as the words were uttered, she clung to him in tears, and it was the only time that he had seen her weep; in that moment of anguish, he besought her but to assure him that he was dear to her, and she did so: nay, she even chid him for the doubt; and thus they parted; the maiden with tears and sighs, and Sir Piercy with the arrow in his heart!

"The bridal was gay and gorgeous, but although bidden to the festival, Sir Piercy was

not among the guests. He had fled the Court, and buried himself in the old mansion which was his only home; and as he walked through the empty and echoing chambers, whose very space rendered their desolation yet more striking, he smiled bitterly at the contrast which his own poverty afforded to the lavish profusion of the bridegroom. His scarlet plume was, indeed, as lofty, his good weapon as sure, his ancient name as proud; but in all else, the rabid tooth of decay had gnawed away the brightness of his possessions; and except a heart as fond and devoted as ever man vowed to woman, he had, indeed, nought to offer to one whom he had dared to love. The conviction was a bitter one—and yet, that his honest affection should have been sold for wealth, was still more maddening; but Sir Piercy visited not the sin upon his mistress—Even when she was about to plight her faith to another, she had avowed her love for him; nor

did he dare to trust himself with the suspicion that she had played him false. Her image was the resting-place of his spirit; and ere he had dwelt long in the solitude to which he was self-exiled, strange thoughts and dreams grew upon his mind, and he welcomed them, wild as they were, for they served to fill the aching void which falsehood had left in his heart. After a time, these visions assumed a distinctness of purpose, which at first startled, and finally fascinated him; and ere he emerged from his retirement, he had vowed to himself a fearful vow, that wedded though she was to his rival, the woman whom he had worshipped should yet be his.

"The Knight returned to Court, and mingled in its festivities as though no sorrow had ever touched him. He pledged the remnant of his patrimony for gold; even the grim old mansion in which he had passed the last few months:

and he flung from him the sudden accession of wealth thus dearly purchased, as though he were unconscious of its worth. He had many associates, but he acknowledged only one friend: and men marvelled when they discovered that one to be the father of his false mistress. The Noble was aged and garrulous, but the Knight bowed before his gray hairs, and sat patiently, hour after hour, hearkening to the oft-told tale of by-gone years. At length the old man died: strangely—suddenly—lying in his bed, with one hand beneath his head, as though he had passed away in sleep——"

The monk paused for a moment, during which he busied himself in trimming the lamp; and then, turning suddenly towards his companion, he added with a gibbering laugh which seemed the very heart-echo of a demon: "Was it not a calm death?"

"It looked like murder!" murmured out De Tracy.

"Pish! 'tis a vagrant fancy—" pursued Father Dominick; "In whose path could the mumbling dotard be such a stumbling-block, that he should peril his soul to be rid of him? And yet there were some who, even as thou hast done, hinted at murder: but the rumour soon died away, and the old man was laid beside his kinsmen, to moulder into dust, and be forgotten. Sir Piercy was among the mourners, and for a time he forbore all sports and festivals; but his friends strove to divest him of this unsocial humour which sat so ill on his bright youth; and at length he listened to their reasons, and resumed his place among them. Think'st thou that the fair dame whom he had loved, was dead to all the homage which for her sake the Knight had lavished on her father? Not so, in sooth: when they met in the courtly crowd, she greeted him with smiles; and when they crossed each other's path in

secret, she met his gaze with tears; yet not one word of passion passed his lips—his time was not yet come! Again Sir Piercy chose a friend among the gallants by whom he was surrounded, and this time it was the husband of the dame. For awhile, the successful suitor looked coldly on the professions of his rival; but he was won at length to return his friendship; and when urgent business called the Knight and his bride to Normandy, Sir Piercy travelled in their company, for he was weary of the frivolities of the Court.

"Did I tell thee that a fair child was born to Sir Piercy's rival? A fair and gentle child; who, as she lay upon her mother's bosom, looked like her second self ere she had expanded into womanhood. Sir Piercy loved the child—aye, loved it; for when it quitted the arms of its fond parents, he cradled it in his—he taught it to murmur out his name, to joy at his ap-

proach, to anticipate his coming; and the father smiled when he saw that the affection which had once been lavished upon his wife, was thus transferred to her first-born."

"And did he deem thus, in sooth?" asked De Tracy.

"He did;" replied the monk, with another low fiend-like laugh; "and wherefore not? was it not *his* child? And now, mark me:—'Twas passing strange that one bright morning, the happy husband was found in the same deep sleep which had fallen in former days upon the hoary father; his arms were wound about his wife, who awoke to find herself pillowed upon a corse!—"

"Now would I swear 'twas murder!" exclaimed Sir Reginald.

"Thou would'st but be forsworn:" resumed the Franciscan; "there was no mark upon him—no sign of violence—And had'st thou seen

the young wife, and the weeping friend, as they hung in grief over the body, thou would'st surely have acquitted *them!* None else had been in his company—no attendant had approached his bed—men stood aghast and wondered: and the pious crossed their breasts, and murmured out a prayer for the departed; and then each went his way, and the mourners were left alone beside the bier——"

"Hark! I heard a step—" whispered De Tracy.

"Ha! Is it so?" murmured the Franciscan in reply: "Are there spies abroad?" and seizing the lamp, he stole cautiously to the door, which he threw back suddenly; but all was still. "Fool!" he muttered as he resumed his seat; "'tis the throbbing of thine own brain—Should'st thou again thus play the stripling, I will reserve my tale for more manly ears."

"Nay, prithee proceed—" said De Tracy.

The monk sat for awhile in silence, as if to collect the images of the past more vividly on his memory, and then in a low and rapid voice he resumed his narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

"All was gloomy magnificence in the chamber of death: the bed-curtains of sable velvet were fastened back with cords and tassels of burnished silver; the covering which was cast over the corse scarcely concealed its outline, and the wax candles gleamed cold and ghastly on its uncovered face. Six maidens clad in white robes, knelt before a temporary altar at the fur-

ther extremity of the apartment; while, nearer to the bed of death, the same number of youths in mourning habits, chanted the 'De Profundis' almost beneath their breath. But there was yet another in that place of sorrow—the young and lovely wife; she who now felt how worthy had been the dead, of the best love of woman, and whose heart smote her that until this hour she had failed to render him his due. Her eye strayed not for a moment; she was kneeling close beside the corpse, and at times the deep breathing of her anguish heaved the light cloth which had been cast over it. Who shall dare to picture to himself the wanderings of her mind as she bent over the rigid form of what had so lately been her lord? She remembered her father—even thus had he passed away—There was a fearful mystery in this calm, silent death, which came stealthily on the strong man in the watches of the night, and withered up

his power—and which, like an arrow shot by an unseen hand, was visible only in its effect. The lady remembered too that she was now a widow in a strange land; and as the 'De Profundis' died away upon the lips of the mourners, and a strange stillness gathered in the death-room, she rose from her knees, and motioned the attendants from her presence. She was alone with the dead—it was a terrible companionship! The closed eyes and bloodless lips, and that chilling and mysterious rigidity of feature and expression so peculiar to death, were palpably before her; yet did not her woman-heart quail, for a wild hope had entered into her spirit, and she thought only of that which she was about to dare.

"When the wide door closed slowly behind the train, she let fall a thick curtain before the altar, which threw the upper portion of the spacious chamber into deep shade; and after

having traversed the floor once or twice with a noiseless step, she again cast herself beside the corpse, and entwined her small, pale fingers in the dark mass of curling hair which lay upon the forehead; she smiled as the raven locks clung round her hand, but the smile was one of horror, not happiness; then she threw her white arms about the body, and bent over it until her cheek rested upon that of the dead; and ere long, she pressed her lips to the lips and forehead, which met them with the chill of marble. She spoke:—words of terrible meaning—of unholy supplication—of phrenzied passion—and ever and anon she wrung the hand which she had grasped in her emotion, and besought it to return the pressure. Then she bade the eyes which had so often looked into hers, to answer them now as they were wont to do; and the lips which she had pressed, to return her kiss, and to whisper love as they

had ever done. 'Am I not thy wife?' she murmured in her anguish: 'Am I less beloved than on the day when thou did'st win me from my first suitor, and when thy vow was, that while I lived, I should not ask in vain? arise then, Aubrey; awaken from thy mysterious sleep! I care not for aught beyond this—only awaken, and sit once more beside me, with thy hand in mine—fulfil now thy vow.—Hear me! answer me! obey me!'

"She spoke in her passion, and she *was* answered: midnight pealed from the turret-clock, and at the last stroke of the hour the hand of the living was fast locked in that of the dead! A cold shudder crept over the heart of the young wife, but she did not speak, nor stir.—A clammy arm wound itself about her, and again a lip with the chill of the grave upon it rested on hers—eyes looked upon her too: large, and dark, and searching eyes, but there

was no light in them; and finally the covering quivered above the limbs of him whom she had summoned from his rest, and he arose. Instinctively she released herself from his grasp, and sprang from the floor. In a moment he stood beside her; the grave-clothes clung closely about his limbs, which were palsied and feeble; his parted lips, wreathed into a ghastly smile, revealed the white and dazzling teeth beneath them, strangely and fearfully: and his cold, blank, soulless eyes glared full upon her, with a look in which affection and inanity seemed supernaturally blended."—

"Did she outlive so unholy a visitation?" gasped De Tracy.

"She did:" replied the monk; "suddenly a thought flashed upon her mind, and she sprang towards the curtain which concealed the altar; but a wild sound, like that of the

night-wind among leaves, caused her to withdraw her hand: her unearthly companion stood in the centre of the floor, quivering in every limb, and veiling his eyes with his bloodless hands as if to escape the blinding light; and the wretched wife knew that from his lips had proceeded that wordless and thrilling sound. Heavy sobs burst from her labouring heart, but she did not weep. In her blindness she had recalled the lost one from the grave, but she had not looked to find him thus!—After awhile she again approached the quailing form, and with kind words, though they trembled on her lips, she besought a pardon and a blessing, but there was no reply; and then she rallied her bewildered and failing energies, and with kinder and fonder tones, she laid her reluctant hand upon the arm of the fearful being, and he looked up, and turned his cold eye, blank and meaningless upon her—Long they stood thus,

each gazing on the other, and at length the lady obeyed a silent signal, and a smile more fearful than an earthly frown, and they sat down side by side upon the death-couch, the stiffened arm around her—the clammy cheek resting on her bosom—and the hollow, rattling breath waving to and fro her dishevelled hair.

"One by one the wasted candles died away in their sockets, and there were none to renew them; for who should dare intrude on that proud lady in her vigils with the dead? No sound was audible in the vast apartment save the hollow and unnatural breathing of the dead-alive, and the beating of the lady's heart; yet she fancied strange voices in the silence—whisperings, and laughings, and murmurings not of this earth: flappings of wings against the arras, and upon the casement; while above all other sounds came the breathing, the low,

sepulchral, maddening breathing of the fearful being who rested on her bosom—"

"I'll hear no more of this!" exclaimed De Tracy, springing from his seat. "'Tis a wild fable!"

"Idiot!" sneered the Franciscan: "It is no fable—can'st thou not read the secret? Listen, that should'st thou ever be in such a strait, thou may'st avoid the failure. While the lady watched beside the corpse, Sir Piercy kept his chamber; and when at dawn, the terrified menials rushed into his presence to tell him the adventure of the night, he dashed his clenched hand against his brow, and cursed in secret the weak wit which had not shewn him that the same draught which put to rest an aged dotard, in whom life was already waxing feeble, might fail to drug to death a strong man whose pulses beat high with vitality and health.—Ha! dost thou see it now?"

"Would'st thou tell me that the gallant Sir Piercy Chepinstow was a murderer?"

"Call it as thou wilt—the deed was his—Thou art incredulous?—Nay then," said the monk, as he laid his hand with fearful emphasis on the arm of the Knight, "thou shalt doubt no longer, for—I am He!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days after the appearance of the Jewess at Cheepsey, De Clancy departed for London. His leave-taking was brief, for he went with the avowed purpose of striving to induce the Lady Rachel to return with him to the dwelling of his sister. "Mabel will do much;" he murmured to himself: "When I am present she will plead for me—when I am absent she will

talk of me, and invent a thousand excuses for my folly, which I dare not myself advance: and Rachel will listen to her, for she has long loved her as a sister. If Miriam hath not deceived me — and when did the high-hearted Jewess stoop to falsehood?—then shall I be no unwelcome guest at Westminster. She will look cold perchance for a while, and utter reproaches which I have but too well deserved, yet, after a time, if she indeed loves me, all will go well." And with this satisfactory reflection the young Baron solaced himself on his way to the capital; but when at length his journey was at an end, and he dismounted from his jaded steed at the little hostel which cumbered, like a huge fungus, a space of ground in the neighbourhood of the Abbey, the conviction became unaccountably lessened. Who could tell what even a few days might have brought forth? In the irksomeness of her solitude after

the departure of the Jewess, the Lady Rachel had, perhaps, admitted other guests, and learnt to feel an interest in one above all others—And who should say that it was not so?

When De Clancy at length reached the mansion of Lord Pembroke, his spirits were considerably depressed; nor was his anxiety lessened when his signal for admittance was answered by a gray and grim old man, by no means suited to the office of a lady's page. On enquiring for the Lady Delawere, he learnt from this modern Cerberus that she had changed her apartments, and now occupied others in the opposite wing of the building, receiving, at the same time, the gratuitous information that "the noise of the gallants to and fro the court had distracted the poor young lady, and disturbed her devotions."

In silent astonishment De Clancy followed the direction of the man's hand, and having

beaten upon the door which it indicated, with the hilt of his dagger, he was at length ushered to the presence of the Lady Rachel by an attendant page—but how unlike the gorgeously-attired boy to whom his eye had been accustomed! Had De Clancy seen the stripling on whom he now looked elsewhere than beneath the roof of a noble dame, he felt that he should have thought him one studying for the priesthood, for he was clad entirely in sables, and although the material of his dress was sufficiently costly, its fashion rather fitted the wearer for the cloister than for the court. The page, on his part, eyed the young Baron earnestly, as though he marvelled what could bring a gallant in a plumed hat, to the presence of his mistress; and, altogether, the passage of De Clancy from the portal through a range of apartments unproductive of any familiar association, was sufficiently dispiriting to raise

a thousand doubts in his mind, and to excite a thousand anxieties.

When he at length reached the vast room in which the Lady Rachel was seated, he found her not alone as he had hoped, for on either side of her chair stood a holy Franciscan, whose godly exhortations were evidently interrupted by the entrance of the intruder. But De Clancy heeded not the monks: his gaze was rivetted on the figure of his mistress, and for awhile he stood silent and motionless.

The Lady Rachel was worn, by the anguish and the persecutions of the last few months, even to a shadow. Still beautiful, her beauty had waned so imperceptibly into almost etherialism, that she was herself comparatively unconscious of the change, nor had Miriam ventured to hint to the young Baron the extent of the ruin which awaited him. She was closely dressed in a heavy black robe which fell at her feet in

dense folds, and from whose hanging sleeves, her worn and wasted hands peeped forth white and transparent; her fair hair was banded across her temples, and her pale brow and yet paler cheek were shaded by a sable veil which fell to her knees—not a jewel glittered in her girdle, nor on her breast; but she looked like one who had been newly widowed. On her lap lay the rosary which had been the gift of Miriam, and it appeared to have fallen there as she first caught sight of De Clancy.

"Rachel!" at length murmured the young Baron.

"Edgar!" exclaimed the maiden as if unconsciously.

"Thou art sick, Rachel, and sad, and yet we knew not of it—Why came no messenger to Cheepsey?"

"I feared to cast a shadow over thy happiness"—was the subdued reply; "they told

me that Miriam had fled to thee to become thy bride—I loved ye both, and thus I suffered in silence."

"Rachel! Rachel!" exclaimed De Clancy, convulsively: "Who hath done this? What fiend hath poisoned thee with lies, and withered thy young beauty? That I have seen Miriam, is true—but on my soul I am now ignorant of her whereabout—She came but to summon me to thy feet, and departed as suddenly as she came."

"'Twas mine own work—" proceeded the lady: "I ever told her that thy heart was in her keeping, and that she would one day be thy wife—and now is my prophecy fulfilled."

"Not so, on mine honor!" persisted the Baron; "I have told thee but the truth—I come to crave thy pardon for the past, to ask thy patience for the present, and to bespeak thy affection for the future. Thou art changed,

Rachel, sadly changed! but am not I also withered since we parted?"

The lady looked towards him as if involuntarily, and a tear swelled in her dim eye.

"'Tis a wan cheek for a bridal;" she murmured to herself; "but he could not quite escape—memory hath been busy with him!"

"Enough of this, fair son;" said the elder monk: "thou hast disturbed the holy maiden in her devotions, and ruffled her humour—let this suffice thee, and depart."

"Is this *thy* will, Rachel?" asked the Baron reproachfully.

"No! no!" she exclaimed vehemently, as though suddenly aroused from her lethargy: "he is the brother of my friend, and must be heard—Pray ye, good fathers;" she added more meekly: "bear with me awhile, and leave us—he hath perchance brought me tidings."

A significant glance passed between the

Franciscans, and for awhile they lingered as if unwilling to depart, but at length the elder monk signalled to his companion, and they quitted the apartment.

"Rachel! my beloved!" exclaimed the Baron, when they were at length alone, as he flung himself at her feet, and pressed her wasted fingers to his lips: "What may this portend?"

The maiden swept her hand across her eyes ere she attempted to reply, nor was it for a considerable interval that De Clancy, by his passionate pleading, could arouse her from her unnatural lethargy. But at length the woman was once more awakened in her heart, and although frowns came with the tears, he hailed them as the harbingers of returning reason; while, seated at her feet, he listened to the tale which she had to tell.

Who cannot imagine its purport? When

Miriam fled from her protection, the Lady Rachel abandoned herself to an agony of sorrow which awakened the fears of the Lord Pembroke, and induced him to appeal to his Confessor for assistance in his anxiety. The wily monk gladly obeyed the summons, and seizing on the moment of mental prostration, showered down upon the head of the unhappy girl the anathemas of the church, for this attachment to a heretic—nor did he fail to reproach her for clinging to one who had himself been convicted of heresy, in slaying some of the true faith in defence of a vile Jewess :—the monk was eloquent, and the maiden spirit-bowed—she listened, and trembled beneath his threats. In her happier days she would have spurned him from her; but now, when she believed that all whom she had loved were gone—when he whispered to her that he had sure information of the arrival of Miriam at

Cheepsey, and that she was about to become the bride of De Clancy — she struggled no longer to free herself from the thrall; and the reaction was fearful! With the same energy as she had previously displayed in her uncompromising generosity, did she now enter into the gloomy bigotry of the monk, and cast herself on his tender mercies—reckless and despairing, she only asked to die; and while he wrung from her at frequent intervals every portion of her heirship which was at her own disposal, he seemed willing in this, at least, to second her desire; for he spared nor fast, nor vigil, nor penance; and the feeble frame, devoured alike by the outward hardship and the inward struggle, sank rapidly beneath its unequal burthen.

Too late did the Lord Pembroke see his error: for his expostulations were silenced by

the Franciscan, and unheeded by his ward and thus the evil grew from day to day, until the meeting which we have just described.

Hour succeeded hour; the grey twilight had stolen over the earth, but as yet no summons had issued from the apartment of the Lady Rachel; and the wondering attendants at length ventured to throw back the door, and enter. The lady was still seated, and De Clancy was at her feet, with his arm folded round her; they were conversing in a low soft murmur, of which the purport was inaudible to any but themselves, yet the voices ceased as the page moved forward with lights and stood before them, and in the next instant De Clancy sprang to his feet.

"Farewell then for to-night:" he said tenderly; "to-morrow thou wilt not fail me?"

"I will bestir me with the first dawn;"

was the reply; "I long once more to be folded to the heart of thy sister!"

De Clancy's suit was won—love had o'ermastered bigotry!

CHAPTER IX.

Again was the vast banquetting-hall at Cheepsey thronged with guests; but on this occasion the revellers parted early, for they had come from afar to share the hospitality of the Knight; and when they had all departed, Sir Geoffrey sat at the head of the board, with De Tracy and the Franciscan on his right and left.

"We have free cheer and few guests, good father:" he said gaily; "and were it not for this gallant Knight, should scarce know how to wile away the hours."

"Nay, surely thou dost wrong alike to thyself and me;" replied the monk; "for truly we now meet so seldom that we should scarce weary for a theme; or perchance Sir Geoffrey Daventry hath lost at Court, his relish for the tamer converse of a poor Franciscan."

"Not so, good father; the more especially as I remember me that thou wert wont to beguile the time with most quaint tales and wondrous histories:—but, I fear me, that they are now outworn."

"I would fain listen to some of these:" said De Tracy; "for I am somewhat heavy from the banquet, and in no mood for converse—"

"Hast thou a love-tale for the nonce, good father?" asked Sir Geoffrey with a smile.

The monk shook his head; "Thou art merry with me, fair son! what should I know of such light pastimes as mincing flatteries in a maiden's bower-chamber? It were scarce seemly."

"Tell us a tale of chivalry, 'an thou hast one;" said De Tracy.

"And where should I gain the lore to dwell on feats of arms?" asked Father Dominick; "the serge and the *discipline* are no meet garb for the tourney."

"Nay, be it then what thou wilt, so that we have a pleasant history;" interposed the host: "e'en chuse thine own subject."

"Reach me that flaggon, I pray thee, Sir Knight;" said the Franciscan, as he stretched his hand towards a costly drinking cup which stood near De Tracy; "tale-telling engenders

drought, and I would fain make provision for my coming thirst."

"Thou art well advised, good father!" laughed Sir Geoffrey; "and I shall augur better of thine history that thou art prepared to moisten it with right methlingin—drain deep ere thou commencest; 'twill make thy words rise more glibly, and mend thy style."

The monk waited no second bidding, but lifting the huge drinking-cup to his lips, swallowed so copious a draught, that Sir Geoffrey bantered him gaily on a feat which would not have disgraced a spurred Knight or a belted Baron!

While the host was thus jesting, Father Dominick fastened a long and earnest gaze on De Tracy; and then sat silent for a moment, as if uncertain of his subject; but the pause terminated at length, and he exclaimed;

"I scarce know how to enter on the tale

I am about to tell, and thus I fear me that it must suffice ye, good Knights, for all commencement, that in by-gone times, when dames were fickle, and it was the Court mode for many gallants to sue for the same smile, a certain Knight of good repute had wooed and won a damsel who should have been his wife, but that another crossed her path who had more gold, and whom she wedded at her father's bidding. One child was born to her, a girl, before the wealthy bridegroom lost his wits, and she was in a far country without a friend save he who should have been her husband—"

"Nay, not so fast:" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey; "I have scarce the wit to follow thee, 'an thou speedest thus!"

"Then will I take more time, and give thee breathing space;" returned Father Dominick, once more glancing towards De Tracy, who was now convulsively grasping the hilt of his

heavy weapon; "The dame was fair, and the Knight, as I have said, demented; and it had been whispered among those who knew them best, that the rejected suitor still loved the lady: but they who said it did him most foul wrong, for when his friend was held past all recovery—I say his friend—for ere the blight fell on him, all jealousy had been extinct between them—at least to human seeming—he saw the dame no more; but yet in memory of past times he bore away the child—"

"The child!" exclaimed De Tracy.

"Even as I have said. 'Twas a fair girl whom he had taught to love him, and the task was easy. Tidings soon reached him that the false dame was well nigh as demented as her lord, but he relented not, although he guessed the cause of her sore trouble—'twas his revenge—long had he panted for it, and it had come at last."

"Methinks he was already fearfully revenged;" murmured Sir Reginald.

"How?" asked the monk with a warning glance: "Were the lost wits of the husband the fruits of the lover's vengeance? Did he hold the shattered brains of the poor idiot in his keeping, and cast them to the winds, that this should be called revenge?"

De Tracy was silent.

"I trust the tale will mend;" said Sir Geoffrey uneasily: "I like not the preface."

"The Knight bore the infant over seas to his own country;" pursued the monk careless of the remark: "once he had thought to slay it, but it smiled itself into safety, and he forbore. 'Twas no meet appendage to a warrior, and for a time he was bewildered how to dispose of it, when the thought crossed him that he could so rid himself of the charge, that none might trace the child, or save it

from a peril worse than death. I have said that the girl was very fair, and the Knight smiled as he remembered that it was thus, for even so was she who wronged him. In a far country lived a creature dependent on him for support—a man without a name—a youth without a father—one whose young years were already dark with crime—whose iniquities had outrun his growth;—and he chose this one to be the guardian of the child—"

"Wretch!" muttered De Tracy with clenched teeth.

"Coward and Traitor!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey: "But how fared the child?"

"How thinkest thou she could fare?" demanded the monk: "The child of promise, the heir of a proud house, the noble girl who bore on her high brow the impress of a haughty lineage—the young, the beautiful, the wealthy Amabel, fled with a Jew!"

"Was the dove frighted from her nest by the swoop of the eagle?" asked Sir Geoffrey eagerly.

"No, on my soul, she was not!" exclaimed De Tracy.

"Is then the tale familiar to thee, good Sir Reginald?" enquired the monk in a calm tone.

"I have heard it told before;" gasped De Tracy.

"Ha! is it so: then hast thou doubtless learnt wherefore she fled?"

"'Twas to escape the cloister; for he to whom her youth had been confided was anxious for her soul, and would have saved her from a damning world!"

"It was most piously resolved!" sneered the Franciscan: "but it would seem that the child of a perjured mother and an idiot father,

had no vocation for a life of peace, purchased so dearly."

"Did'st thou call her Amabel?" asked Sir Geoffrey.

"So had her mother named her.—Sir Aubrey's bride herself was Amabel."

"Whose bride?" almost shrieked the host, as he rose from his seat, and leant eagerly towards the monk.

Father Dominick turned aside in affected disorder, and covered his face with his spread hands; "Ask me no more!" he said hurriedly: "I have betrayed my secret."

"Is it of mine own blood that thou hast told this fearful tale?" persisted Sir Geoffrey: "Was my young cousin the fair child of whom thou hast said so much?"

"I fear me that she was—" replied the Franciscan.

"And my poor uncle? Tell me all, for I am

maddened by my doubts.—Did his wife play him false?"

"Never!"

"Yet died he mad.—How came he by that distemper?"

"I am bound to answer, since I have unhappily divulged so much;" said the monk with affected reluctance: "Sir Aubrey's rival weighed his wits against a well-drugged cup, and he drank madness in the draught."

Sir Geoffrey groaned deeply, and buried his face upon the table; while the Franciscan glanced with a look of demoniacal triumph upon his victim.

"And Amabel?—tell me, how fared she?" at length gasped out the host.

"She died heart-broken, an alien from her house—the wife of a heretic—the abandoned of her faith."

Again there was a pause, as Sir Geoffrey

writhed in his agony; and it was the voice of the Franciscan which broke the silence.

"She left a most fair daughter."

"Ha! say'st thou so;" exclaimed the Knight, once more aroused from his trance of anguish: "doth she yet live?"

"I need but name her to thee;" was the reply: "she is the orphan daughter of Ben Abdel."

"The Jewish Miriam!" cried Sir Geoffrey; "the noble-hearted Miriam! What hast thou done to hold thy peace so long?—and she is on to York—and there are rumours of an outbreak among the people at Lynn, which may spread far and wide, even to the city in which she hath taken refuge.—May the saints prosper me in my search for the fair child, or she will perish!"

"I will away with thee, though my life may be the forfeit;" exclaimed De Tracy:

"'twill be one bright link in a chain of crime —she may yet be saved!"

"By thee?" sneered Father Dominick; "that were a goodly feat! The hand which struck down the father is well fitted to shield the child!"

"No more of this, Sir Monk;" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey sternly; "I do suspect that thou art a traitor—thou hast eaten of my bread, drunk from my cup, and slept in safety beneath my roof, and yet thou hast suffered me to put forth one of mine own race to perish."

"Traitor, if thou wilt;" said the monk doggedly: "What care I for thy race? If I have indeed dwelt among thy people, and polluted my lips with the bread which thy gold has purchased, 'twas for mine own good pleasure, and because thy race had wronged me; and I swore that they should pay me back the debt—"

"Wronged *thee*, poor worm!" said Sir Geoffrey Daventry in a tone of taunt; "What had we to do with such as thee?"

"I will tell thee, even while the sneer is upon thy lips:" retorted the Franciscan—"Worm as I may be now, the reproach sits lightly on me, for I have had my sting; aye, and stung even unto the death—I am Sir Piercy Chepinstow—"

"Thou!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey, bending forward with a look of horror.

"Aye, I!—the baffled suitor who lost his mistress—the friend who wept with the false one when she mourned over the wreck of what had been her lord—the Knight who fled with her fair infant—Now trample on the worm—for I am He!"

"There is yet a frightful mystery;" gasped out Sir Geoffrey: "I would know all—"

"Thou shalt;" exclaimed De Tracy, spring-

ing between them: "*He* drugged the cup which did its two-fold murder—*He* urged my hand against Ben Abdel's life—*He* promised me the love of thy fair wife—"

"And *He*—" continued the monk, pointing towards his accuser—but ere he could complete the sentence the dagger of De Tracy was in his heart; "Parricide!" he shrieked in his agony as he sprang high into the air, and in the next moment fell back a corse upon the marble pavement!

CHAPTER X.

When the deed was done, Sir Geoffrey and his companion stood for awhile gazing upon each other in silence; but at length the Knight of Cheepsey exclaimed gloomily; "I know not what may have been thy wrongs, De Tracy, nor what thy provocation; but thy too ready dagger hath defrauded me of my just vengeance. Had I not a more dark account with

him than thou? Was he not a dweller beneath my roof, and a traitor at my very hearth? And more — should'st thou not have remembered that, crime-worn as he was, he had once borne an honourable name, and rather have given him time to cast off his disguise, and meet thee breast to breast in fair field, than have thus played the assassin, and stained the halls of a noble house with blood?"

"What said he as he expired?" demanded De Tracy in a shrill whisper.

"He called thee 'Parricide';" shuddered Sir Geoffrey: "can it indeed be thus?"

"I know not—I know not—" gasped the Knight: "and yet he had warned me that it was even so:—but it cannot be—man never trained up his first-born as he trained *me*—never led the son of his affection into the depths of evil as I was led—never laid bare before him

the detail of his own crimes as he hath done—he could not be my father!"

"Let us not forget, be our regrets and sufferings what they may;" interposed Sir Geoffrey; "that this is murder; and that our liberty, if not our lives, is jeopardized by this foul act. We must away with him ere other eyes than our own have registered the deed."

"But whither?" asked De Tracy: "men will see us as we pass forth."

Sir Geoffrey replied only by pressing upon the spring of a moving pannel in the oak wall, and revealing to his companion a stone stair leading downward into the vaults beneath the chapel. Having secured the entrance door of the Hall, he then proceeded to assist in removing the body, first carefully folding the monastic dress about it, to absorb the blood which was slowly oozing from the death-wound. With some difficulty the two knights succeeded in their

purpose; and while De Tracy bore the head of the corpse, Sir Geoffrey raised its feet, and with a lamp in his hand, led the way through what had formerly been the wine-cellars of the Abbey, to the dungeons already described. Here De Tracy, sinking under his awful burthen, would have laid it down beside a pile of coffins, but Sir Geoffrey startled him by a wild cry of: "Not there! not there! how could the murdered rest beside his murderer? that is the last Sir Aubrey—"

Instinctively De Tracy sprang forward a few paces, and as he again stopped, he stood at the entrance of one of the narrow passages which connected the vaulted niches; and here, on a signal from his companion, he deposited the body, and having hastily piled above it a quantity of the huge stones which were strown on the floor of the dungeon, the burial-place of the monk soon presented only the appearance

of a pile of rubbish. This done, the two Knights hurried from the subterraneans which were now the depositary of a fearful secret, and having carefully ascertained that no trace remained to betray the tragedy in which they had so lately been actors, they passed from the Hall in haste; Sir Geoffrey to the apartment of his wife, and De Tracy to the solitude of his own chamber.

When Sir Geoffrey Daventry entered the presence of the Lady Mabel, his look was haggard, and his long hair hung in disorder upon his shoulders: his dress was ruffled, and there was a wildness in his eye, so utterly at variance with the placidity of his ordinary appearance, that his wife started from her seat as he approached, and rushed towards him.

"What ails thee, Geoffrey?" she asked anxiously; "what fearful adventure hath befallen thee? But a few hours back I left thee

tranquil as thy wont—and now—speak, mine own Geoffrey, what means this anguish?"

"Mabel;" said the Knight, as he sank into a seat, and buried his face on her shoulder; "Mabel, I have heard a frightful tale, and witnessed a frightful deed—I scarce know how to tell thee; for I am sick at heart: but I must away at dawn, and thus thou shalt know all when my spent breath comes back upon me—give me wine, Mabel, wine!—I thirst."

The lady obeyed in silence, and the Knight eagerly seized the goblet and drained a deep draught; and then, as they sat side by side, her hand in his, and his head pillowed on her bosom, he told her *all*. With tears and trembling did the Lady Mabel listen—and the memory of murder for a time obscured all others; but when, after a while, she reverted to that which she had just learnt of her husband's relationship to the unhappy and persecuted

Miriam, and that the remembrance of the gentle Jewess came back upon her, her anxiety amounted to agony as Sir Geoffrey imparted to her the rumours that had reached him of a second Jewish massacre in Norfolk, which it was greatly feared would extend further after the embarkation of the King for Normandy; when the people would be freed from the restraint of his displeasure, and left in comparative liberty to wreak fresh indignities on a race which they persecuted with all the intolerance of bigotry, and all the virulence of individual hatred. That Miriam should escape, in such a case, seemed hopeless; for too many were privy to her history, who forgot all her miseries in the recollection that she had slain a christian with her own hand, and that she was, moreover, obnoxious to the Priesthood, for the thrall in which it was reported that, by unholy

arts and sorceries, she held a noble lady, to the great peril of her soul.

"Go—use thy best speed, fair husband;" exclaimed the lady ardently; "even though I could stay thee by a thread, I would not stretch it across thy path—save her, if there be yet time, for she is worthy of her proud lineage."

As he became more calm, Sir Geoffrey exerted himself to impress upon his wife the necessity which existed for the most perfect caution on her part, relative to the disappearance of the monk.

"Remember, Mabel;" he said; "that I were dishonoured, did any even whisper that murder had been done beneath my roof—and having reminded thee of this, I need scarcely urge the subject further."

"But De Tracy—" said his wife: "I cannot brook to look on him again."

"There will be no need;" was the reply; "Sir Reginald will on with me to York."

CHAPTER XI.

When the foregoing tragedy was enacted at Cheepsey, Miriam had already been for some time an inmate of the dwelling of the Rabbi Ben Israel at York. The Rabbi was a stern man, whose naturally austere character had become hardened yet more by the recent persecutions which had fallen upon his people. In person he was tall, majestic, and commanding: past

the middle age, but erect as in his first youth; his hair and beard were prematurely bleached, and gave him the appearance of being yet fuller of years than he was in reality, while his cold, keen, gray eye, his firm and peculiarly chiselled mouth, and his high and calm forehead, lent a dignity to his demeanour, and told a tale of decision, thought, and mental strength, totally independent of time. Such was the Rabbi Ben Israel, who, at the moment in which we present him to our readers, was seated in the midst of his family, with a huge folio before him, and his head resting upon his hand. Near him stood his wife, a pale, bent woman, some ten years his junior; on whose calm features a quiet repose usurped the place of higher expression. It was easy to detect, at the first glance, that her own feelings and prejudices, if, indeed, she had ever possessed either, had been o'er-mastered and subdued by a mightier

spirit; and that the meek helpmate was now the mere creature of obedience and submission. At a frame bearing a piece of costly embroidery, wrought in threads of gold and silver, and enriched with seed pearl, sat Miriam, busily plying her needle; while at her feet, a young man, reclining upon a cushion, was engaged in arranging some jewels in several caskets which lay beside him. The youth was tall, and symmetrically formed, with that dark, flashing, meteor-like beauty, so peculiar to his race: finely-shaped black eyes, whose striking expression almost negatived the use of words, and a smile which lit up his countenance like sunshine. At some distance from this groupe, another and more youthful party were seated in a circle, engaged in some quiet sport, which, if it rose for a moment into merriment, was instantly hushed as the presence of Ben Israel was remembered. These were the younger children of the Rabbi:

three lovely girls, all sparkling in the rich beauty of their first rush of life and innocence; and a fine boy some year or two their elder,

"Thou art right, Anna:" said the Rabbi, raising his eyes from the ponderous volume over which he was poring: "Thou art right—Miriam hath o'ertasked her strength, and forgotten that in her zeal to aid thee, her health may suffer."

"Not so;" said Miriam, calmly; "Can I do aught which may suffice to satisfy mine own heart, and to prove my gratitude? Alas! no. This is, indeed, light labour—'tis mine own thoughts which wither me."

As she spoke, the youth glanced up sadly at the pale face which was bowed down over the embroidery frame.

"Look not on thy backward path, daughter;" said Ben Israel coldly; "It is true that

our dwelling is not even as the dwelling of Ben Abdel; for he was favoured by fortune, and whatsoever he touched turned to gold; our way hath been more stony, and our path less straight, — yet, should it seem well in the sight of the Mighty One of Sinai, we can still pursue our pilgrimage, and share with thee our loaf of bread, and our draught of water, without a fear that famine will o'ertake us in the wilderness. If we do not yet more than this, it is that thou hast thyself cast away the hand which was outstretched to thee."

The cheek and brow of Miriam burnt as she listened, but she continued silent.

"Even Esrom, my first-born, would I have given unto the daughter of Ben Abdel;" pursued the Rabbi. "The child of hopes and prayers—the strong man of my race—he, whose speed is that of a roe upon the mountains, and whose heart is as the heart of the warrior,

knowing not fear—as a cedar of the wilderness hath he grown beneath my sight, and as a fair tree beside the running brook hath he flung wide his branches. Even the love of Esrom have I offered unto thee as a portion, and thou hast rejected it."

"It is not yet too late——" murmured the young man, as he looked up anxiously: "I have been too hasty with the maiden;—when mine eye first turned on her, my heart went with it, and I remembered not that she was in affliction, and that the tears were yet wet upon her cheek. I do but suffer through mine own blindness."

"Say not so, Esrom;" said Miriam in a tone of anguish: "didst thou know for how poor a prize thou hast striven, the wish to gain it would at once pass thee by — mine is a withered heart."

"Dearer even thus in its decay;" said the

youth passionately: "than others in their first bloom—Miriam, I will serve for thee as Jacob served for Rachel—I will toil for thee among the Gentiles—be but thou the light of my path, and the meed of my labour, and I will become a wonder among the people, and a proverb in the mouth of the tribes—The wise men shall point at me as I pass—and my name shall be as a sweet odour which passeth not away."

"Esrom;" urged the maiden; "let me not be the blight of thy bright youth, the canker of thy proud beauty, the Delilah to steal from thee the strength which is thy boast. Let me love thee as a brother, and cling to thee in my need, as to one in whom I can put my trust—I have suffered much; and even as the dipsacus supplieth its own thirst, so have I hitherto sufficed to mine own protection; but, like that treacherous flower, I also have a worm gnaw-

ing away my heart, and its work is almost done."

"Yet if some cunning hand pluck forth that worm, it is a plague-cure:" persisted the lover; "suffer me to follow out thine own image, and to prove its truth, sweet Miriam."

"Alas!" was the reply; "It is now too late, "I am the bride of memory."

"Maiden;" said Ben Israel: "we live in evil times for our faith—dark days have fallen upon us; and we know not whether the next blow which descends upon the heads of the persecuted Hebrews will come from the East or from the West. While I live, and while my wife sits beside her own hearth, thou may'st truly abide among us as thou art; but should the corner stones be rolled away from the building, thou could'st no longer abide beneath the tottering roof; Esrom might indeed protect these little ones, for they are of his own blood;

but thou would'st be fain once more to go forth, lest men should point the finger of scorn at thee, as an in-dweller with one of ripe years, to whom thou wert neither sister nor wife."

"Should that day indeed come;" said Miriam meekly: "I will depart without a murmur—I can bear to encounter hardship, and to suffer deprivation, but I cannot stand before the altar, and again plight a faith which hath been already pledged."

"Daughter of Ben Abdel;" interposed the Rabbi more sternly; "thou hast repaid us evil for good—when we made for thee a place at our hearth, we gave to thee a place in our hearts also—the eye of Esrom's spirit hath rested on thee; the peace of his soul hath departed—his mother weeps for the trouble of her first-born, and his father offers to thy love the pride of his house—and yet thou art content to fold thyself closely in the mantle of thine own past affec-

tions, and to fling from thee the more wholesome homage of one of the true faith. We looked not for this at the hands of thy father's child."

"Rabbi;" replied the maiden, as she raised her eyes steadily to his face; "hadst thou told me that thy protection was to be bought at a price, I should have turned away from thy threshold, knowing that I had not wherewithal to satisfy thy claim—that the sunny spots of my youth had been made desolate, and the running waters of my spirit quenched—Hadst thou extended towards me thine open palm, I would have knelt, and placed it upon my head, that thy blessing might rest upon me; and then I would have passed from beneath the roof of Ben Abdel's friend to seek a home elsewhere; but when I obeyed thy bidding, I knew not that sorrow was to be exchanged for thrall."

"We have merited the rebuke:" said the young man in an accent of self-upbraiding, as he buried his face in his hands.

"Esrom;" continued Miriam; "thy years are yet few, and thy heart fresh—could the Eagle, while his wing was strong, and his eye keen, linger in his eyry, when mated with one whose flight was feeble, and who could no longer brook the sun-glare? Thou dost wrong alike to me and to thyself. While I am yet an in-dweller in thy father's house, I will be unto thee as a sister—a fond and loving sister; I will tend thee in sickness, comfort thee in sorrow, glory in thy virtue, and bear with thee in thine infirmities. But, Esrom, the rose which hath been scattered, blooms no more—the heart which hath been cast back upon itself, awakens not its energies again—it stands like a withered tree, a mark for the lightning; it may yet be rent more utterly, but even under a warm sun

and a kindly sky it can never more put forth its leaves."

"Thou art too young to have been thus smitten, maiden;" said Ben Israel in a stern tone.

"Am I so?" asked Miriam; "Thinkest thou that the bolt which laid low the parent trunk, left the sapling unbroken? Or that the subsiding of the tempest passed over it scathless, as it folded its heavy wing? There are more depths in the Red Sea than those which swallowed up the host of Pharoah."

"The duty of the young is obedience;" said Ben Israel coldly.

"The boast of the strong is power, but the privilege of the mighty is mercy;" replied Miriam: "The sword can wear away its scabbard, but not the less may it lie harmless even when unsheathed — the mountains rear their lofty heads to the sky, yet their shadows

linger long and cool upon the earth—the swift river which runneth to the sea, slakes not the less the thirst of the parched and fevered pilgrim."

A cloud stole over the brow of the Rabbi, but he vouchsafed not a reply; and ere the silence was again broken, he rose slowly, and quitted the apartment.

"The vail of my spirit hath been rent;" murmured the young man after a pause; "and the sanctuary of my heart hath been laid in ruins; yet will I not reproach thee, oh! daughter of Ben Abdel, for the trouble which is come upon me; nor mingle my complaints with the harsh words of anger. Rather will I lead thee forth into the sunshine, and fashion a fresh garland for thy brows, and a sweeter melody for thine ear, and be unto thee as one loving thee too well to take heed of the affliction of his own youth. Like Mordecai of old, will I sit in the gate waiting for thy coming;

and I will welcome thee with soft music, such as shall be pleasant to thy soul. Dazzling is thy beauty as the blossom of the pomegranate tree, and soft is thy voice as the songs of the daughters of Sion; thy footfall is as that of the young roe on the hill-top, and thy smile as the sun-burst upon Mount Ephraim. I will gaze on thee in silence, and with my tongue will I never more offend. I have sought to build up the temple, and lo! my hand hath failed in its strength."

As the subdued and mournful murmur died away, the wife of Ben Israel turned her eyes tenderly on her son; and ere Miriam could reply, she took up the strain:

"When I was young, and comely, and like the blossoms which lift their golden faces to the sun, I also turned from earth in search of a brighter light, and behold! it came; even in the eyes of my first-born. As he lay upon my

bosom I clasped him close, lest the blessed dream should end—when he stood at my knee I listened to his soft voice, for the accents of my son were to me as the harp and as the dulcimer, making the echoes glad; and when the boy grew into a man, and that the strength of his race was in him, I gloried in the child of my heart's hope, even in Esrom my beloved!—Gentle is he, and pitying; and often hath the hand of the young man dried the tears of his mother: but his own tears who shall dry? the heaviness of his spirit who shall put away?"

"Ben Israel is a wise man;" said Miriam; "shall his son fail even in this first trial? The hand of the young warrior is on his weapon, shall it be smitten thence by the first stroke? The mother of Esrom hath mourned in secret, and wept when none were by, that a shadow had grown upon her path—would she seek to deepen the gloom which over-spreads the way of one whom she hath loved?"

Anna made no reply, but concealed her face amid the deep folds of her veil.

"Hearken!" suddenly exclaimed Miriam as she rose from her seat, and flung her arms wildly above her head; "The spirit of spent days comes back upon me, and the fearful future mingles with the frightful past—Vain alike is the love of the young, and the wrath of the old —the strength of the mighty, and the pleading of the weak — the cry of death is upon the wind! From the depths of his blood-stained grave Ben Abdel beckons to his child—and she is ready. Buckle on your armour, ye who are sworn to the combat; gird the weapon to your thigh, and take your shield upon your arm, for again the cry of blood is gone up against Israel! Strew your heads with ashes, and clothe your limbs in sackcloth, ye who are the mothers of the mighty men of war; for behold! they shall perish in their strength, and be scattered even

as the sands of the desart, or as the waves of the storm-tossed deep. Weep, daughters of the tribes, for your beauty will ere long be in the dust, and your fresh youth a prey to the spoiler—Let the aged men and the children put forth their strength — and even then let them not hope to beat back their enemies, for lo! they are many. Doth the weapon of destruction fail for awhile,—behold! the fire cometh to consume and to destroy.— Do the winds of Heaven beat back the flames, rejoice not, neither be glad, ye who are of the tribes of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, for that weapon is not yet sheathed, and will resume its work. Ben Abdel's grave is very deep—men look not on it, for it is dug far into the bowels of the earth — yet out of that hidden grave he hath revealed the coming slaughter—Who shall stay the hand of the spoiler, or rescue Israel from the bursting of the thunder-cloud?"

As she ceased, Miriam sank upon her knees, with clasped hands, and bowed-down head; while the startled woman who stood beside her, overpowered by an emotion to which she was unaccustomed, and an energy which she was unable to comprehend, remained motionless with awe: and even the cheek of Esrom was blenched.

The temporary silence which succeeded was broken by the voice of Ben Israel, who rushed into the apartment, exclaiming in hoarse and hurried accents:—

"Up and away! ye who have yet time for flight—aged man and sucking babe, weak woman, and he who hath strength in his right arm—fly ye, and tarry not—the Mighty One of Israel hath once more veiled His face from His people, and the Gentilès are upon us!"

CHAPTER XII.

The intelligence of the Rabbi was but too well founded; the massacre at Lynn had so aroused the blood-thirsty hatred of the rabble against the Jews, that the spirit of slaughter spread far and fast; and men, seized as by a sudden madness, rose in bodies against the defenceless Israelites, and slew them in vast numbers. At Stamford, during the festivities of the fair of Lent, when Jew and Christian were mingled

in the crowd, and the sounds of revelry and merriment were loud on every side, the cry of death was raised, and its work was done with a bitter industry, of which the fruits were pillage, crime, and murder. Thence the infection of this moral malady spread to Lincoln, and in that city the havoc among the persecuted tribes was awful.

At the latter place, the Rabbi Ben Israel had a relative, a man of wisdom and substance, who had long been held in honour by his people, and in reverence by the family of which he was the head; his wife, Esther, was one of the fairest among the daughters of Israel, and the children who stood around his hearth were dutiful and lovely. Men bowed down their heads as they crossed his path, for he was looked on by the Jewish people as one under the especial protection of Divine Grace. All in which he engaged prospered beneath

his hand, and his life was one of thanksgiving and peace. But the days of old returned not for the devoted Israelites, for though the one righteous man was in the city, yet did the city perish even with that man in the midst of it. They slew his fair children on the floor of his dwelling; even while he struggled with his persecutors, and Esther clung in silent despair about her little ones—they slew them all! Yet did he strive vigorously against his enemies, for his young wife was still beside him; but what availed his single strength against a hundred? His wife was torn from his hold—dragged from the bodies of her murdered children—hurried away, while he struggled with those who hemmed him in—and he saw her no more! At length he sank exhausted and bleeding at the feet of his assailants, and they believed him dead, but it was not so—when darkness fell upon the earth, he was discovered by two of

his own tribe, who had escaped the slaughter; and carried secretly to York; there he lingered for a short space, beneath the roof of Ben Israel: and ere he expired, he heard the solemn vow breathed by the Rabbi, that sooner than the wife of his bosom, and the children of his love should fall into the power of the Christians, he would slay them with his own hand; and the dying man smiled as he listened, for never yet had Ben Israel failed in a given pledge.

As the Rabbi rushed into the apartment, the death-bell of the Cathedral church tolled out its melancholy note; while the yelling and hooting of an infuriated populace came upon the wind, mingled with the shrieks of women, the shrill screams of children, and the despairing curses of doomed and desperate men!—Instinctively Esrom folded his arms about Miriam, and would have borne her away, but

she gently thrust him back, and pointing to his mother, she said calmly: "Not me, Esrom, I have none to weep for me if I perish—waste not a thought on me—*she* loves thee—" The young man hesitated for a moment, and during that short pause the Rabbi raised the fainting Anna in his arms, and followed by his younger son, who in his turn led his little sister by the hand, he turned towards Esrom, exclaiming; "To the tower!—to the tower!—Jesse the son of Daniel holds the door:" then hurrying from the room, he disappeared.

The young man instantly caught up the child which cowered, weeping with affright, at his feet, and flung her across his shoulder; and then, grasping the arm of Miriam, he rapidly followed upon the steps of his father.

Quitting the house by a side entrance that abutted into a narrow lane, over which the projecting upper stories of the houses met so closely as almost to exclude the daylight, the

fugitives made their way through a close and noisome quarter of the city, whose miserable inhabitants had already fled to join the rabble, and to visit upon the heads of the Jews the vengeance of their own squalid poverty; the cries of their persecutors rang in their ears as they fled; and once, when they were compelled to traverse an open space more subject to observation than any previous portion of their journey, they discerned at a distance a party of their enemies rudely armed with stones and staves, and even household implements, now diverted from their peaceful purposes into instruments of death.

As the little groupe approached the tower which was to be their place of refuge, they were met or overtaken by other parties, hurrying towards the same spot. That the Jews should venture on such a step as that of flying to a strong-hold held in the name of the

Sovereign, had evidently never occurred to the rabble; who, with all the want of forethought and arrangement common to blind and infuriated passion, had rushed forward in their headlong haste towards the Jews' quarter, eager for blood and pillage: while they left the avenues to their dwellings unguarded, and the path comparatively open. This tower, which had but a short time previously been garrisoned by a body of soldiery destined for the Holy Land, had been left, on their departure to join the Monarch in Normandy, in the custody of a converted Jew, a man of some trust, assisted by half a dozen men-at-arms. Jesse, for thus was he named, when he saw the evil which had fallen upon those who still professed the faith that he had himself abjured; and witnessed the cruelties and wrongs of which they had been made the victims, without provocation given or expressed on their own part;—when he found

that they were rewarded for purposed loyalty and submission with all the horrors which bigotry could invent, and ruthlessness could perpetrate, and that they were no longer safe beneath their own roofs, and in the bosom of their own families; — Jesse, when he saw all this, strewed dust upon his head as he remembered that he had fallen from them, to make one of their enemies; and in all the agony of a repentant spirit he bent his steps to the dwelling of Ben Israel, to beseech that he might again be received into the bosom of the tribes. For awhile the Rabbi was obdurate, but as the thought grew upon him that the convert had returned to share the evil with the children of Israel when the good was overpast, he rebuked no longer, and rather welcomed the strayed lamb back to the fold. In the excess of his exultation, Jesse would have flung away his Christian trust, and returned to

dwell among his people when they were in jeopardy, but Ben Israel bade him desist.

"Be wary with thy secret:" he said, "and show to no man the innermost recesses of thy heart; the cry of blood hath been long upon the wind, but as yet it hath passed us by: should our day come, with thee may many of the persecuted find refuge; the strong men may do battle from the walls, while the women, the children, and the aged, are safe from the hand of the spoiler. To thy post, Jesse, thou son of Daniel; thou hast been long an offfaller from the faith of thy fathers, but thou may'st yet redeem thyself with the people. I will whisper it among the tribes, that so when the evil day comes, (if come it should!) they may know whither to bend their steps—and may the God of Abraham so deal with thee at the last day, as thou shalt keep faith with them!"

Such were the circumstances under which the Jews now pressed forward towards the strong-hold where Jesse held his guard; and when the Rabbi and his family reached the outer gate, followed by a crowd of trembling and eager fugitives, they were received by vast numbers of the persecuted people who had already reached this place of anticipated safety.

The tower had originally been of great strength, having in the centre a turret capable of containing a hundred persons, who in their turn could defend themselves with some chance of success against the other inmates of the building; it had however, at this period, suffered in a slight degree from the effects of both time and violence, though it was still no contemptible place of refuge. Even after the entrance of Ben Israel and his family, many parties, and scattered individuals, were admitted,

but at length no other fugitive stood before the gates, and more effectual measures of defence were adopted under the direction of the Rabbi. The soldiery who had been under the command of Jesse were secured and cast into the dungeons, but no hair of their head was injured: "Let them live:" had Ben Israel said; "ere long we shall have time to shew them how the tribes of Abraham revenge themselves on their persecutors."

The remainder of the day was passed in suspense—a terrible suspense, when it was discovered that although above six hundred persons were congregated in the tower, it contained not provisions for their subsistence for a single day. In this frightful emergency, the Rabbi withheld from the people, even from the palsied veteran and the lisping infant, all food until the morrow. "Sleep, ye whose eyelids are heavy:" he said calmly: "and, ye who cannot

rest, watch over the heaviness of your companions, for to-day ye have eaten, and been filled, and your strength will uphold you."

When the mourning people had heard his words, and learnt that there was no food, they shrank back aghast, but uttered no murmur at his decision. And then the Rabbi called aside Jesse the reclaimed servant of Israel, and asked of him in secret, whether indeed none in that vast crowd had borne with them in their flight the means of prolonging existence; but the answer was a fearful one—one had gathered up his gold, and another his jewels, and a third his costly stuffs, but no man had dreamt of famine! Then Ben Israel hid his face in his mantle, and groaned aloud; for none stood near him save Jesse the son of Daniel.

"Let not my Lord grieve:" said Jesse; "neither let his spirit be cast down; for although the food which was gathered into our

strong-hold for the soldiery may not suffice to satisfy all the people, yet will it uphold for a time the strength of my Lord, and of the wife of his bosom, and of his little ones; and for them shall it be guarded in a secret place known only to my Lord and to his servant, who will not himself eat thereof, lest it fail to satisfy those who are worthier than he."

"Not so, Jesse:" said the Rabbi, looking up steadily; "nay, not so: How should I abide the thunders of Jehovah the Righteous One, did I eat the bread of the children, and of those who may serve Israel, and leave them to perish? Rather let us carry the provision to a secret place, and apportion it carefully; giving some to our strong men, that they may not wax weak in the defence of the tribes; a smaller share to our maidens, that should the Mighty One of Sinai withhold his hand ere all perish, our race may not pass away; and the

little which will yet remain to the weak children, and to the mothers who have sucking babes. From the aged whose years are many; and from the mothers whose sons are tall men, and whose daughters are asked in marriage: and from such as may not aid us to hold fast our footing in this our city of refuge, from the sickness of the body which hath unstrung the sinews, or from the sickness of the soul which hath made the heart weak, will we alone withhold the nourishment required by their brethren.—Let the suffering sink beneath their malady, and the cravens perish in their cowardice;—better thus than that they should linger on to become the prey of evils yet more terrible."

The command of Ben Israel was obeyed, and the night passed even as the day had done; the flames of their burning dwellings made light in the hiding-place of the Jews; and men

looked into each other's faces by the fierce flame which fed upon their homes, and upon their household wealth; they looked, and scarcely recognized each other in their mutual haggardness. Here, the bride who lay upon the bosom of her bridegroom, turned away in terror from the flashing of his eye, and the grinding of his clenched teeth—there, the widowed mother who clung to the knees of her first-born, hid her countenance that she might not see the calm and still despair which was seated like a grim demon on his lofty brow—while sisters whose arms were twined together, buried their young fair faces on each others' shoulders, and whispered out the affection which they dared not look! Some there were among the aged, and the palsied, and the querulous, who uttered childish wails, and still more childish upbraidings, but none heeded them; and many a mother clasped her infant

to her breast, and smiled sadly as it drew forth the living stream which stilled its feeble cry, as she remembered that she could yet impart the strength which was fast failing in herself.

One alone in that fearful crowd seemed to have lost all memory of her own peril, in soothing the sufferings of others: it was Miriam—She moved among the several groupes, uttering kind words to the sick, soothing to rest the terrified and impatient children, and whispering encouragement to the despairing. Ben Israel himself, having looked carefully to the defences of the tower, and secreted the provisions, upon which, to all human seeming, the preservation of the little community must ultimately depend, had sunk down beside his terror-stricken wife in stern and silent anguish; and Esrom, as though self-rebuked that he had for a moment forgotten

his affection in his love, now pillowed the head of his fainting mother on his shoulder; while beside him lay a stout weapon ready to be seized on at a moment's need: and near it were stretched his two young sisters on his outspread mantle; but they, blessed in their youth and in their weakness, had wept themselves to sleep!

—So passed the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

When the gray light of morning made its way into the tower, the scene was frightful. Men haggard with anxiety and watching—women pale and trembling, with dishevelled hair and disordered garments—and children shivering with cold, and craving for food. Scattered about the floor lay piles of rich goods, and caskets of jewels, for, in the general panic, the merchant heeded not his mer-

chandize, nor the miser his wealth; and there were many among the sufferers who would gladly have exchanged their treasure for bread; but it came not to their necessities. And now, as the light grew upon them, so did their peril become deeper, for the secret of their hiding-place had been discovered, and the coming sounds of violence grew upon them with frightful rapidity. As the dreaded danger approached, Ben Israel resumed his energy; and having called around him the strong men, the young mothers, the maidens, and the weeping children, he gave into their hands the slender portion of nourishment which had been allotted to each; and then, indeed, a cry arose to Heaven, as they from whom the food for which they craved was withheld, lifted up their voices, and called for vengeance upon their enemies; nor when the cry had ceased, was the wail by which it was succeeded less pitiful, as the strong men

bore their share to their aged fathers, and the young maidens turned aside their eyes as they pressed their own upon their withered mothers; while the children, eagerly swallowing their insufficient portion, looked anxiously for more. This painful duty over, Ben Israel embraced his son, and returned slowly to the side of his wife, whom he found seated between her little ones, swallowing the bread which Miriam had laid upon her lap; but Esrom withheld that which he had himself received; he had seen his brother and his little sisters devouring each their share, and had beheld from afar off the self-sacrifice of Miriam, yet he retained his own portion, even though he knew that his father fasted.

While this sad scene was passing within the tower, that which met the eye without was even more appalling. A dense multitude, desperate and lawless, armed with every variety

of missive which could be converted to the purpose of a weapon, were yelling forth their baffled rage in the voice of fiends, and scaring the affrighted echoes with shouts and imprecations; and still they were yet gathering thick and fast from every quarter; until, far as the sight could reach, nothing was perceptible to the tenants of the tower save a moving mass of human beings, ripe for violence, and drunk with crime! The first effort of the assailants was to force the gate, which was of oak cased with iron, and thickly studded; and failing in this attempt, lighted brands were flung into the air, and stones hurled at the narrow loop-holes; but the rage of an ill-appointed and worse-organized rabble was powerless against the solid masonry of the building, and the careful watching of its tenants. Meanwhile, the heavy stones which were, from time to time, loosened from their hold on the summit of the

tower by the Jews, and rolled down upon the wretched crowd beneath, made frightful havoc, though it did but serve to exasperate the spirit of the rioters.

The day of tumult was waning to its close, and the clear spring sun flung his downward beams on the scene of slaughter as he slowly descended the Heavens, when a sudden shout was heard; a shout of wordless, thrilling exultation, and the wretched inmates of the tower held their breath tightly to catch its import, but the attempt was vain; and when at length the cry subsided, it was succeeded by a silence so dense and deep, that the strange stillness was even more appalling than the fiendish outbreak to which it owed its birth. Soon a motion was perceptible in the huge human mass, and men were seen with difficulty forcing their way in various directions through the crowd, but still no renewal of violence appeared to be

meditated by the assailants. The mystery was ere long solved; the messengers returned, laden with provisions which they distributed on all sides, while others again departed in search of more; and long after the sun had set, and the shades of evening had deepened on the earth, the fainting and famished Israelites looked down upon a scene of rude feasting and drunken riot, which made the demon Hunger gnaw yet more fiercely into their vitals!

When the morrow came—the last day on which any were to taste food—the miserable Jews doubted no longer the design of their enemies, and that the tower had become their grave. Some wary spirit among the crowd had foreseen the probable dearth of provisions in a fortress so slightly garrisoned, and thus famine was to do the work of violence. As the conviction grew upon them, the wretched people gathered about the loop-holes, and on the roof of

the tower, and looked down in gloating silence upon the food which passed from hand to hand, in such profusion, that it was often thrust impatiently and loathingly aside; and yet the supply ceased not, for in that vast multitude some were ever to be found who fasted.

The hideous effect of this contemplation manifested itself appallingly, when Ben Israel about noon, called together those who were to share the slender portion of food which yet remained unconsumed; for as he doled out to each their miserable share, the eyes of all the tribe were on him: and when it had left his hand, mothers sprang upon their screaming children and wrenched it from them—men struggled with their fathers, and devoured it before their eyes—and even the very maidens who had lovers among the tribe, swallowed it hastily with terrified and hurried looks, lest they should becalled upon to resign that which they could so ill spare.

Hunger was past with Miriam; a dull, faint sickness had succeeded to the craving which had assailed her but a few hours back, and she turned with a quiet step to the spot where Anna was seated with her head bent down upon her knees:—"Eat, wife of Ben Israel;" she said gently,"Eat; here is bread—" but there was no reply. "She sleeps;" murmured the maiden to herself; "Would that I too could sleep!" and having placed the bread in her bosom, she sat down beside the Rabbi's wife, and abandoned herself to thought.

Hours crept on: the chill twilight once more spread over the sky, and men looked up to Heaven despairingly, as though conscious that they were beyond human help; women forgot their gentleness, and murmured curses where they should have whispered prayers, as they saw their wasted children perishing from famine; and the aged sick sank into their last

sleep with the cry for food upon their livid lips.—

Day came again; and yet the wife of Ben Israel had not awakened from her sleep; her youngest child had slumbered all night with her fair head upon her mother's shoulder, and awoke weeping with the chill which had crept over her; and Miriam took her into her arms and folded her in her mantle, and hushed her again to rest, lest she should disturb so calm a sleep; but her care was needless—Anna had sunk into the slumber which is dreamless—the rest which no sound may break! Ben Israel wept not when he discovered the frightful truth; he only looked towards his children as they stood by in speechless wonder, and turned silently away.

Miriam laid the body decently upon the earth, and cast over it the mantle of Esrom; and then, as the infant girls first awoke to consciousness of their bereavement, and burst

into that unmeasured grief which is so terrible in childhood—that premature anguish which outspeeds time, and stains the cheek of infancy with the suffering of age—she spoke softly and kindly to them, and took from her bosom the fragment of bread which she had hidden there, and although, as she drew it forth, she dared scarcely trust herself to look upon it, she resolutely rent it in twain, and fed the children with the food which she had destined for their dead mother!

Oh, Nature! thou art a fearful mystery—The bereaved ones forgot their trouble, as they once more cheated famine of its due, with a pittance of food which, nevertheless, could not deaden the pangs of hunger; and clung to the being who had thus administered to their bodily cravings, with a tenacity which for a time effaced the memory of every other evil.

The sun had again set upon their dead, yet

the wretched Israelites had not seen the grave close over them—They had now, indeed, arrived at that state of utter misery, when the dead were left to bury their dead, for all that was human in the survivors was fast passing away. Expiring women, famishing children, and brave men sinking beneath their hunger, were to be met on every side; and then it was that Esrom, wild and haggard in look and gesture, lifted his dying sister from the lap of the fainting Miriam, and bore the passive maiden to a small room in the centre turret.

Heaped on the midst of the floor was a pile of costly manufactures—shawls from India, silks from the looms of Hindostan and Persia, and muslins almost impalpable to the touch. Upon this carefully constructed couch he laid her down, and, quitting her side for an instant, he returned with a small silver vessel filled with a liquid of fragrant scent and

rich colour, in which were steeped the portions of bread that had fallen to his share on the two first days of their sojourn in that melancholy prison; then, with all the tenderness of a woman, and all the devotion of a lover, he raised the drooping head of the exhausted girl, and poured into her mouth a few drops of the invigorating draught; for a time she lay motionless upon his shoulder, but after a short space, she flung her white arms about him as she murmured: "I knew it was a hideous dream—Edgar, thou could'st not leave me here to perish—had I not sacrificed myself to ensure thy happiness? fled from thee when my heart bled at every step? thought of thee in the night-watches when all around me slept? and do I not love thee still? shall I not carry thine image to my grave? De Clancy, I may scorn thy falsehood, but when I have once loved, who shall teach me to forget?"

Esrom turned away his face, and groaned deeply.

"Thou hast brought comfort to my soul, oh! my beloved—" pursued Miriam, after an interval of exhaustion; "thy breath is upon my cheek, and the light of thy smile hath brightened my spirit—they bade me love another: had I obeyed them, how could I have looked upon thee now?"

"Eat, Miriam;" murmured the youth, as he lifted to her lips a part of the saturated bread; "thou hast fasted long."

Miriam obeyed passively, and with extreme difficulty swallowed that which was offered to her; and then, refreshed by the restorative qualities of the liquid, she withdrew her head from its resting-place, and, raising herself upon her arm, looked wildly about her.

"Esrom!" she exclaimed; "what means this? Son of Ben Israel, wherefore hast thou

recalled me from the grave, and wasted upon my waning strength the bread of the aged men, and of the little ones? — Nay —" she added more gently after a pause, as she gazed upon his wan and wasted countenance: "why hast thou bestowed upon my weakness that which should have upheld thine own strength?"

"Chide me not, Miriam;" said the young man deprecatingly; "I loved thee, and I could not see thee perish. With thy portion did'st thou feed my mother and her infants, and I do but repay the debt."

"But I have drunken wine;" persisted the maiden; "wine which would have given might to the weak, and courage to the sick at heart."

"Not so;" said Esrom: "thou hast but tasted water from the well, in which were infused the precious gums of Araby. It chanced that I wore them in my vest to give forth a

pleasant odour, and when I saw thee sink at length beneath thy privations, I bethought me of their reputed virtue: chide me not then, Miriam, that I have done this thing."

"And thy father?"

"I merit not the rebuke;" said the young man, as the unbidden blood mantled for a moment in his haggard cheek; "to him also have I borne this precious liquid, and he hath drunk."

"And thyself, Esrom?"

"Nay;" replied the youth, as he averted his head; "life is yet strong in me—I need it not."

"Drink, Son of Ben Israel;" said the maiden emphatically, as she pointed towards the cup; "Drink, if thou would'st still look upon me as a sister; the life to which thou hast restored me were indeed a misery tenfold more bitter than heretofore, did I know

it to be purchased by the privation of my benefactor."

Esrom did as he was bidden; and swallowed a small quantity of the liquid; and then Miriam gently and tenderly withdrew from the cup a portion of the bread, and held it towards him; and when he had pressed her hand silently to his lips, he swallowed that fragment also; but the effort was succeeded by a gush of tears; and the son of Ben Israel, the silent, stoical spectator of the miseries which had hitherto overtaken him, wept like an infant.

There is something awful in the outbreak of a strong man's grief! We look not to see tears in such eyes; they are as blood-drops wrung from the heart's centre, weakening the very springs of life; and the throes which shake the iron frame are as the struggles of a giant, before which the spirit quails!

"Esrom!" murmured Miriam; and the

young man lifted his head and looked towards her.—"Esrom, our hour is surely come; for the dead and the dying are in our path, and there are shadows upon the hill-side, which stretch along the earth even unto the great deep; voices whisper in the depth of midnight, and the grey clouds of morning take wild shapes, as they creep onward over the chill sky. The departed of the tribes are still unburied, and thrice hath the declining sun looked upon their livid corses; the right arm of our men of might is smitten down, and their slackened sinews refuse to support the shield which should protect their helpless maidens, and their weeping children. Surely our hour is come! Weep not then, Esrom; but rather rejoice and be glad, for after the day of labour succeeds the night of rest—When the corn is reaped, the sickle is laid aside.—Weep not for the aged — they were full of years, and the

savour of their good deeds hath ascended on high; neither weep for the little ones, they are preserved from the evil to come—Shall we not all lie down together, and be at peace, ere two suns have run their round—the strong, and the weak—they who number their lives by years, and they for whom it is numbered by months and days?"

"If there be vengeance at the Throne of the Most High——" commenced Esrom.

"Curse not!" exclaimed Miriam impressively; "lest the curse fall back upon thee—Behold! once with my lips did I dare a curse, and the stain of blood is yet upon my hand. Think'st thou that I have washed it thence? I tell thee, Son of Ben Israel, that the foul stain hath tainted me; that it colours my dreams, and quickens the pulses of my brain.—But hark! what means that outcry?—that shout of thrilling horror?—Never yet heard I such a

maddening yell—it seems to tell of murder!"

As Miriam spoke, she would have rushed from the room, but her strength no longer sufficed for the effort; and sinking back upon her temporary couch, she could but gasp out a hurried entreaty to Esrom, that he would fly to ascertain its import. As the wild yell continued, and rather grew more loud and terrible, the young man obeyed without a comment, and hastened towards the scene of action.

Long did Miriam look and listen for his return, but he came not; and her reason failed at length beneath the horrors of that continued and mysterious burst of human passion; and with a faint groan she closed her eyes, and lay still and senseless upon her cushions.

CHAPTER XIV.

Esrom had scarcely carried Miriam from the apartment in which the aged and the women of the tribe were congregated together, when a low whispering was heard among the armed men, which gradually swelled into a wild and thrilling wail. They had cast themselves upon the ground in groupes, and as the darkness gathered around them, the outline of their

wasted forms loomed out amid the gloom, spectral and ghastly. Hope had departed from them; and they sat among their elders, and their wives, their maidens, and their little ones, like spirits held back from their place of rest by some lingering tie of earth. Ben Israel stood erect in the midst; there was a cloud on his withered brow, and his compressed and livid lips were rigid as stone: had any looked on him in that hour, they would have felt that some terrible thought was grappling at his heart.

But the wretched beings by whom he was surrounded remembered only their own sufferings, and those of the dear ones whom they saw perishing before their eyes; and the groupe at the upper end of the vast chamber commenced the death-song, which was caught up by each party in succession, and pealed forth with a wild energy, which threatened to subdue their poor remains of strength.

"The sword is shivered, and the shield is rent; Jerusalem is laid low, and foxes burrow amid her ruins. Who shall repair the weapon, or renew the city?

"The aged men have passed away, and the wise men sleep on their wisdom—the lightning hath struck the temple, and the vail is rent in twain. Who shall watch by her high-places, or dig the graves of her departed?

"The maidens have flung away the bracelets from their wrists, and the anklets from their legs, and blackened their faces that their comeliness may not shine forth as a light to the ungodly,"—murmured the women in low sad accents; "Who shall restore the lost beauty of the daughters of Israel?"

"The strong man faints at his post, and the babe dies on the breast of its mother;" resumed the men: "Help comes not, neither is there bread for the famishing. Who shall

bring relief to the wasted tribes of the wilderness?"

"Even He who is Mighty!" pealed forth the chorus of voices; "the Only One of Israel—He who spake with Moses on the Mount, and in the bush which burnt, yet consumed not. He who rideth on the wings of the wind, and holdeth the storms in his right hand! Who is He?—He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—Jehovah, the Eternal!"

The wail died away; and then Ben Israel lifted up his voice in the assembly, and every sound was hushed.

"Children!" he said, "the yoke of the Gentiles is on your necks; the foot of the Gentiles upon your heads. While ye perish of hunger, wassail and revelry, riot and debauchery are even beneath your eye. The very waste, the mere excess, which is cast from your enemies with the loathing of repletion, would

suffice to save your wives and your little ones from famine; but sooner would they scatter their abundance to the four winds of Heaven, than hush the pangs they have themselves called forth. What was our crime? Did we not live in peace among them? Did we ask aught at their hands save to be suffered to trade in their cities, and to traffic with their merchants? We lifted no arm against them—we raised no outcry in their streets, nor on their highways—and yet, how have we been requited? The tyranny which smote our thousands in London, and raised a holocaust of Jewish blood to Heaven in honour of the coronation of a Christian Monarch, hath since swept down its hundreds elsewhere—Many of ye have heard how it fared with mine own kinsman at Lincoln—some of ye were even beneath my roof when he expired—the master of a desolated home—the father of a murdered family—the husband of—but I cannot pursue the picture—"

said the Rabbi, as the words faltered in the utterance—"nor doth it need; these are not memories which are wiped from men's hearts for years, or centuries! I would only ask of ye to recal these things now—Ye have but two alternatives, and the hour is come in which to choose between them! Either throw wide your gates, and admit your enemies—prostrate yourselves before them, and tender to them your famine-withered wives, and perishing children—deny the faith of your fathers, and become the bondmen of the Christians,—or show the Gentiles that ye are men, and not dogs—that those whom they have taunted, wronged, and outraged, are worthy to be raised to their high places, and to sit among their mightiest; and even as they read the lesson, teach them also that in your very worthiness to do all this, ye scorn to cling to the occasion. Ye have no food—if ye are true men, ye are fit to die—aye,

and willing! Few among ye have been smitten more cruelly than I — yonder lies my dead wife—the wife of my bosom, the mother of my children—here are her little ones;—ye need not look upon them; they are even as your own—and I swear to you that, sooner than a Christian grasp shall fasten on their dying throats, they shall die by mine own hand—aye, *by mine own!*—This is the other path which is open to ye all.—Do you murmur horror? You are right—you are right—no other accents were meet here. Let the craven who cares to prolong his dastard life by submission to the Gentiles who have brought this ruin down upon us; and on whose heads will be the blood which must be shed this day when it cries to Heaven for vengeance, let the craven live to be the mark of scorn and ignominy—The Rabbi Ben Israel will never abandon the faith of his fathers—the God who led his people through the wilderness, and the deep sea!"

As the Rabbi ceased, a wild and convulsive sob burst from the crowd: the re-action of long-suppressed and stifled breathing.

"What would'st thou of us?" at length demanded a young man whose arms were about his wife—the bride of a month!—"Thou art wise, and must counsel well—I will abide by thy decision."

"Even as my Lord willeth, so be it—" said a faint voice at his elbow—it was that of Jesse, the warder of the tower.

"The enemy holds us pent;" resumed the Rabbi; "There is no mercy in the Gentile; we are to die inch by inch — but we are men, and this death must not be our portion — Ha! another victim hath escaped the tyrants; surely a soul hath passed away upon that thrilling cry."

A deep and anguished groan from the young husband who had just spoken, betrayed where

the bolt had fallen—His fair bride was dead upon his bosom!

"Up, and be doing, men of Jerusalem!" exclaimed Ben Israel; "let us not thus die a hundred times in those who are dear to us—Have I not said that neither I nor mine should ever wear the Christian yoke, or pamper the Christian hate? The task may be a frightful one, but it shall be accomplished — Come hither, Sara—" and at his bidding the gentle child with difficulty rose from the floor on which she had been seated, and dragged her weak limbs to the side of her father; "Look on her;" he pursued, as he thrust back the waving curls from her brow, and gazed wildly on the haggard faces which were all turned towards him in mute and terror-stricken suspense: "Look on her — Is she not a fair child? Aye, even amid famine and misery,—the fairest of my flock—the lamb of my fold — Shall I leave her to the

tender mercy of the Christian?" and as he spoke a startling light glimmered in his eye; "shall I give my darling to the lions?——Sara!"—and with frantic fondness he lifted her from the ground, and fastened his lips upon her pale and wasted cheek;—"Never again will thy light foot make music in the ear of thy father; never again will thy young eye look brightness into his—Yet stand from before me, lest I suffer my soul to sicken, and my hand to fail—I will lay hold upon the Rock of Ages—my foot shall not faint by the way!"

The sparkle of insanity, the insanity of suffering and enthusiasm, played over his features as he sank upon his knee, and folded his arms across his breast—but he retained not long the meek position which he had so suddenly assumed. In the next instant, with fierce and frenzied energy he sprang up, exclaiming in a loud voice—"I cannot pray—my soul is

parched within me: I am a blasted tree, and shall the branches endure, when the trunk is withered? Who holds fast my hand? Who thwarts me in my pious purpose? Stand back! ye who suffocate me by your pressure—stand back! and give me space—Am I not your Rabbi? Where is now your reverence for your Ruler? Ye will not! Nay then——" and the maniac flung wide his arms, and grappled with space, while the crowd shrank back aghast.

"Ha!" he laughed bitterly, as the paroxysm subsided; "I have yet strength—strength—but the time is short. I feel the icy hand upon my throat. They lie who tell ye that men live not without food—Are we not each and all beyond its power? Do we crave now? and yet we live!—True, true;" he muttered hastily, as his lurid and restless eye lingered for a moment on the mantle which covered the body of his dead wife; "some refused the privilege—some cared not for the exemption." But

the direction of his gaze wrought yet more powerfully on the disordered senses of the Rabbi, for pressing his hands forcibly upon his eyelids for a moment, he remained silent; and when he again looked up, the unnatural light had vanished, and the famine-stricken man stood before his fellows, pale, haggard, and exhausted.

"Have I raved?" he asked in a shrill and fearful whisper; "Hath the hollowness of hunger crept into my brain? — Have I stood before the remnant of the tribes, a drivelling idiot? Ye gaze upon each other as who shall say, 'How shall we answer him?'—I ask no more of ye—in your silence I am answered."

"Father—dear father—" murmured the voice of Sara, as she pressed her lips to the hand which had now fallen powerless at his side.

"True!"said the miserable man; "the voice of the innocent one hath recalled me to my

purpose—I am not mad now—Mark me, men of Israel, I am not mad when I shew you how to save your dear ones from the destruction that is worse than death."

As he spoke, he plunged his hand deep amid the folds of his robe, and drew it forth again, clutching a slender poignard.

"Thou would'st not slay the child?" cried the horror-struck Jesse, raising himself on his elbow, and grasping the armed hand, as a groan burst from the crowd.

"And wherefore not?" asked the Rabbi in an accent of calm despair; "If I withhold the blow, canst *thou* save her?"

"Alas! no—" murmured the Warder, sinking back to his original position.

There was a deep hush; men looked not upon each other, but forward—forward—to where the fair child stood passively in the grasp of her half-maniac father; while women gasped

out their breath, and children clung closer to each other. Meanwhile, Ben Israel bent down over his daughter — he smoothed back her clinging hair, — he looked into her dim eyes,— he clasped within his own the long and wasted fingers—and now both her small hands were in his own—in his left hand—and he drew her close to him—closer—one sob of his pent-up breath escaped him in that moment, and but one—ere another respiration heaved his chest, he struck! — He let the fingers he had clasped escape his hold, and with a slight spasm and without a cry, his child fell back with the smile which his last fondness had called to her young lip—a corpse!

A wild and concentrated groan burst from the spectators; but the frenzy of famine was upon all; the sacrifice of their Rabbi awakened within them a feeling which had hitherto been dormant; and they heaved to and fro, and

glared savagely about them like men smitten by sudden madness.

"He hath done well!" shouted the young widower with a thrilling laugh.

"Say not so!" shrieked a fainting woman, who in her exhaustion had yet strength to clasp her infant closer to her bosom; "but he hath more—he hath more—I have only this little one!"

"And it is dead;" murmured Jesse; "saved from the wrath to come."

"It is not dead!" cried the young mother; "It cannot be dead — I have held it to my breast since day-break."

"To what avail, unhappy one, when the fountains of life are dried up by famine?"

The woman looked wildly at the speaker, and then down upon her infant—she looked, and never spake again!

Meanwhile, the Rabbi had resumed his

energy, and this time his words had fallen into not unwilling ears; many of his listeners sprang to their feet with a fierce yell, and deep oaths were uttered that their women and their children should not become the prey of their persecutors; and then commenced a tumult awful to behold! Men, trembling on the verge of the grave, the wild resolve o'ermastering for awhile the weakness of the body, eager to terminate their lives by crimes so fearful, that in their days of happiness they would have shrunk but to have heard them named—grappling with those who yet preferred to die from famine, or to live by submission to their enemies. But the contest was too unequal to endure long; the earnest words, the wild impassioned gestures of Ben Israel, aroused his listeners from their growing torpor, only to impel them into delirium; and even the frantic shouts of the young husband, who stood glaring upon the

corpse of his lost and lovely bride, added to their effect.

For awhile, no sound could be distinguished in that vast apartment, save the faint cries of the cowering women, the shrill scream of the children, and the deep sobs of men who were past tears; until the voice of Ben Israel rose, clear and piercing above all:

"Where is Esrom, my first-born? Why comes he not to sleep with his kindred? Why linger the wheels of his chariot?"

The cry elicited no reply: and then again arose that startling voice:

"Fears he to die the death? Then let him live the life of the craven—of the apostate—of the accursed—Let no sun lighten his path—no water cool his parched lip—no grass grow upon his grave.—Let him have the yoke of the Gentile upon his neck, and the curse of his dead father upon his spirit!"

It was at this moment that Esrom rushed from the apartment in which he had placed Miriam, to learn the nature of the unearthly outcry which had penetrated even to that distant spot; but his progress was impeded by a dense crowd that had blocked up the entrance of the turret; and impatient of delay, he turned rapidly in the opposite direction to discover another outlet. Unacquainted with the intricacies of the building, he soon became bewildered by the uniformity of the galleries and chambers through which he passed, and with the wild and mysterious tumult still ringing in his ears, found himself unable to reach the spot whence it proceeded. Much time was lost in retracing his steps, for bewildered alike by faintness and anxiety, his eye wandered over familiar objects without recognition, while he was misled by a supposed recollection of others which were strange to him; and

when he at length reached once more the door of Miriam's apartment, he discovered that she was no longer its only tenant. She was yet seated upon the couch which he had spread for her, but every symptom of exhaustion had vanished from her countenance, and she was engaged in listening with fixed and fearful attention, to a groupe of women who clustered about her, surrounded by their pale and dying children. As Esrom approached, her quick ear caught his step; and raising her finger hastily and authoritatively to her lip, every voice was instantly hushed.

"Whence comest thou, Esrom?" she asked gently.

"In sooth I may scarce answer thee, sweet Miriam;" replied the youth, as faint and feeble, he cast himself on the floor beside her; "I have been wandering hither and thither in search of an outlet to the tower to do thine

errand, but save that which was thronged with a dense crowd which impeded mine egress, I have found none other—and the cry, or mine ear fails me in mine exhaustion, hath now ceased. But why look ye thus upon each other? What means this sudden silence?"

"It means, Esrom," said Miriam resolutely: "that death hath been busy among the remnant of our people."

"And my father?—And my brethren?—" exclaimed the young man starting up to depart.

"Nay, hear me out—" said the maiden as she grasped his arm: "Resume thy seat; Ben Israel needs thee not."

The youth gloomily obeyed.

"Esrom;" pursued Miriam taking his passive hand in hers, while he gazed on her with a look of eager terror; "Esrom, when

thy heart was light, and ere this evil had come upon us, thou did'st love me—"

The young man drew a long and convulsive breath, and closed his wasted fingers over the hand which had been placed on his.

"I was alone—friendless—desolate—when I listened to thy suit, and my heart was heavy, so that I heeded it not—to-day I tell thee that it is upon thy breast that Miriam longs to die—"

The head of the youth drooped over the hand he held.

"I deemed my trials unparalleled—they were only bitter—I thought that none other could suffer as I had suffered,—now I look around me and am rebuked, Esrom; Let me be unto thee parent, and sister, and friend—thou hast none other on earth!"

Esrom glanced upon her a look of wild enquiry.

"Thou shalt know all while I have strength to tell it. Our best and wisest have sunk beneath their pangs; sunk, Esrom, less in body than in spirit: the lamp remained long after the light had departed; the eye woke while the soul was lost in sleep—"

"But my father? But Ben Israel?"

"The fiercest flame consumes its fuel the most quickly:" replied Miriam: "The Rabbi escaped not the sudden madness."

A deep groan burst from the women who stood around them.

"And the poor orphans?" again urged Esrom.

"They are at peace.—It is a fearful tale;" pursued the maiden more rapidly: "and yet it must be told: Esrom, the children saw not their father die—*His* hand—"

"Miriam! Miriam!" exclaimed the youth, as he sprang from her side, and stood erect

before her: "I ask no more—I see it all—*all*—" He remained silent for awhile with clasped hands and bowed-down head; and when he again spoke, it was with the cold unnatural calmness of utter despair; "I have heard it from thy lips:" he said, "or I should not have survived the tale—Thou art friendless and unprotected, or I would not outlive its horror even for an hour. Happy mother! who died ere her little ones were slain before her eyes.—Wretched son! who lives to learn that his father—"

"Esrom!—" murmured Miriam in her most gentle tone.

The young man started, and bent over her.

"Esrom, I sicken—I faint—I die—yet I beseech of thee, let me not look upon thee in this agony ere we part for ever. The bow of the archer is unstrung—the chords of the lute are broken—I go to the pleasant valleys where the streams make music—who shall sit beside me upon

their banks? Here we are the captives of the captive—These weeping women—these pale mothers who hold their skeleton children by the hand, are fugitives who have flown hitherward for refuge—some of them, as thou seest," and she pointed towards one who was then expiring: "only to die!—Hearest thou not the heavy blows of the men who close the turret-entrance from their fellows?—the efforts of those who yet dare to hope, against those who have hugged despair, and would fain immolate *all*? —But what avail bolts and bars? they cannot imprison the soul! The dove spreads her wings, and they gleam white in the morning light; and ere the lion hath cast the dew from his mane, she is high on the hill-top, rejoicing in her freedom!"

"And that is our only hope:" said Esrom gloomily: "they who should have cherished

us have left us none other—for behold—Miriam ! we shall at least die together !"

A yell of fiendish triumph from without the turret—a cry of shrill anguish from within—followed close upon his words.—The half-maniac wretches who had steeped their souls in blood, and done a deed which almost extenuated the hatred of the Christians, not satisfied with the slaughter of those who were most dear to them, had delayed their self-murder, only until by heaping against the entrance, the costly and inflammable merchandise which they had borne with them in their flight, they had fired the turret; and thus rendered the simultaneous destruction of the less violent and more sanguine of their brethren a probable event.

Exhausted by famine, wearied by exertion, and paralyzed by terror, the wretched victims of this double enemy gazed in mute and

motionless despair on the fierce flames which, fed by eager hands, and fanned by a light wind, made rapid progress, and extinguished their last hope! In the agony of the moment, women rushed to the casements, and flung their infants to the crowd below, to save them from a more dreadful death—while men shouted aloud in their agony, and vowed themselves to the Christian creed, to be rescued from a doom so appalling!

Esrom and Miriam alone stirred not, spoke not: in that hour they clung to each other with parted lips and straining eyes, his arm around her, and her long hair sweeping the floor. They were alone: such of the men as yet possessed strength and energy for exertion, were busily employed in removing the barriers which they had so lately erected against the outlet of their voluntary prison; while others stood near them gazing gloomily upon their

feeble efforts. The women, wild and shrieking, ran hither and thither, searching for some method of escape; and meanwhile the flames grew and gathered about them.

At this instant a shout was heard from the street — a long and eager shout; which was succeeded by the clashing of weapons, and the trampling of horses. Nearer it came—nearer —nearer—it was on the threshold of the tower —there was a rush—a shock—and the clank of armed feet resounded on the stone pavement.

Careless at that awful moment of all danger save that of falling a prey to the flames, the wretched Jews sprang forward to escape by the open gate: while onward into the very jaws of the destruction from which they fled, rushed two Cavaliers, followed by a body of men-at-arms. "Miriam! Miriam!" shouted the foremost as he strode on: "Pardon and

protection to him who shall conduct me to the daughter of Ben Abdel!"

But none heeded the promise. — In that moment protection, profit, all were forgotten in the eager hope of escape; and the Cavaliers pressed on over the dead and the dying, the murderers and the murdered, heedless of the peril which thickened around them. As they approached the turret, the failing ear of Miriam caught the cry; and raising her head from the arm of Esrom, on which it had been pillowed, she shrieked back a reply—

"It is the voice of my beloved! he comes on the flame, and amid the fires. — Edgar! De Clancy! I am here—"

Esrom, recalled from the torpor of approaching death by the utterance of that well-remembered name, sprang to his feet, and flung the maiden from his clasp: and while the quick-coming steps grew louder, he stood

in the midst of the floor half-bent, as the tiger crouches ere he springs upon his foe. It was the last effort of expiring strength—the last impulse of jealous hate;—and as an armed man entered the apartment, with a wild bound, and a shriek yet wilder, he rushed towards him, and buried his dagger in his throat! Down they fell together—the victim and his murderer—the fingers of Esrom still clutching the hilt of the weapon—the blade yet sheathed in the throat of the Christian. Esrom moved no more: life was exhausted in that wild outburst of passion; and he lay motionless above the writhing body of his victim.

Miriam meanwhile had risen to her knee, and her dim eyes were turned towards the prostrate bodies; while the rapid movement of her livid lips betrayed her effort to articulate, and the wild and phrenzied motion of her arms betokened her eagerness to approach them; she

seemed indeed unconscious of any other object; and it was not until a gentle touch fell upon her shoulder, and a gentle voice uttered her name, that she withdrew her strained and dilated eye-balls.

"Save him!" she shrieked wildly, as the words at length came; "Save him! he is not dead—"

"Alas!" said Sir Geoffrey Daventry, as he looked towards the body of the Knight which some of his followers had extricated from the death-grasp of the young Hebrew: "Alas! De Tracy hath gone to his account, and thy care can in nought avail him—We must fly while the path is yet open—Miriam, I have come to save thee!"

"Edgar—" murmured the maiden, rapidly relapsing into the lethargy from which she had been so fearfully aroused: "Pleasant are thy words as the sound of rushing waters.—My

soul thirsted for thee, and lo! thou hast obeyed my voice.—I have had wild dreams since we parted, but I have told Ben Abdel all, and he will receive thee as a son—The torches burn brightly—they are lighted for our marriage-feast."

"Miriam—one effort:" urged the Knight as he strove to lift her from the ground: "if we linger here, we perish!"

"Fill high the wine-cups:" resumed the failing voice: "Fill, and spare not; Ben Abdel hath enough for all;—and yet, methinks, I thirst—they told me thou wert false, but I heeded them not. Esrom would have won me from thee, but I laughed them to scorn, for Miriam hath no second love. 'Oh, Israel!' I exclaimed as I listened, 'thou shalt not be forgotten of me—have I not been thy hand-maiden? and hath not my lamp drank of the oil of thy brightness?—But what is this? Talk

I of Israel in this hour? Hark! to the clashing swords, the shrieking women—do you not see that there is blood upon my hand!—all—all—they have slain all—and then they tell me of my marriage feast."

Sir Geoffrey in despair cast off his mantle, and raising her in his arms, prepared to bear her from the apartment. "Poor victim!" he murmured to himself; "thy miseries have crazed thee!"

"Do we fly, my beloved?" whispered Miriam, as she nestled her face in his bosom: "let it be far—far—the breeze is fresh on the hill-tops; here my breath comes heavily, and every sigh seems to rend my bosom—here I have sat down in the dust, and scattered ashes upon my head, for my spirit hath been smitten; and I long to lift my brow once more among the daughters of Jerusalem, and to tune my

harp again to the sweet songs of Sion.—Esrom —Edgar—do we fly?"

The Knight attempted no reply, but surrounded by his followers, he with difficulty forced a passage through the encroaching flames, and bore his passive burthen from the tower; when he reached the court-yard, he placed her gently on a rude bench, and spoke soothingly to her; but for awhile she did not raise her heavy eyelids, nor did she seem conscious of his efforts.

"Speak to me, Miriam;" said the Knight; "I am Sir Geoffrey Daventry—the husband of the Lady Mabel—the friend of De Clancy, —thine own kinsman.—Wilt thou not speak to me?"

"I hear thee—" murmured the feeble voice of the maiden: "I am rebuked that I told thee not this before:—the chariots and the horsemen are gathered together, and they are many.—Pardon me, my father; De Clancy bade me

hold my peace, and I obeyed because I loved him—but all is over now:—the rushing winds have scattered the forest leaves, and the chill of winter hath come upon us—I feel it here, at my heart.—The idol which I had built up in the pride of my youth is overthrown, and the depths of my spirit are cumbered with its ruins! Father, she is beside thee—hast thou no greeting for the fair-browed stranger? Is she not very lovely? She is his Christian mistress — And here are more of them — more! — Mothers with their dead infants — and fathers who have their hands upon the throats of their little ones—and old men who die cursing!—But I am safe upon De Clancy's bosom—he hath plucked me from the flames, and — Nearer — nearer —" she whispered — "I would feel thy warm breath, for there is a chill—a chill—I would look on thee—why dost thou stand aloof, and let the fire play

upon thy weapon?—Mount Ararat is veiled in clouds, and there is a shadow over Jordan; or is it that mine eye is dim, and that I look not upon them as I was wont? It may be that my strength is spent in watching for my beloved; but he is come at length, and my task is ended. And now I hear the harpings of the holy ones —the soft low anthems of the prophet-choir— Edgar, I am weary—I would rest—so, so— thy heart beats gently—I can sleep to such sweet music!—sleep——"

A convulsive sob rose to the lips of the Knight: "Found only to be lost!" he said sadly, as the weight grew heavy in his clasp: "Alas! Mabel, our care has been in vain; the pure soul hath fled, and we can now offer no shelter but a grave to the ill-fated daughter of Ben Abdel!"

THE END.

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NOTE.

The author trusts that the slight deviation from historical accuracy which she has committed in the catastrophe of her tale, will be pardoned by its having considerably softened the shades of a picture, in which, as it is presented by the old Chroniclers, she felt the extreme difficulty, if not the utter impossibility, of interesting the feelings of the reader without revolting his taste. As her best apology, she subjoins an extract:

"One of their learned gouernours caused foure hundred of their companie to consent to haue their throts cut at one an others hands, he himselfe cutting his wiues throt first, whose name was Anna, then his childrens, one after another, and last of all slue himselfe, onelie rather than he would fall into the hands of the Christians, that had thus long besieged them. The rest perceiuing what their great Rabbi had doone, set fire upon all their goods and substance, which they had gotten into the tower with them, and so consuming the same, would haue burnt also the residue of their fellowes which would not agree to the Rabbies counsell, in the cruell murthering of themselues, if they had not taken a strong turret hard by within that tower, and defended themselues both from the fire and crueltie of their brethren, who had made awaie themselues in such manner as I have said: and that to the number of foure hundred, or (as some write) fiue hundred at the least."

Holinshed. Richard I., page 211.

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